LEARNING / H1

Bright, young Igorot hopes to follow in Rosa Rosal's footsteps

WORLD/ A28

Pope lands in Sydney, plans to say sorry for sex abuses of priests

WORLD/ A28

Angelina Jolie gives birth to twins

NEWS / A2

China threatens lawsuit over NorthRail project

Pinay, 14, tops Asian Sudoku tournament

By Terra Quiwenzolo

SARAH ESA, 14, THOUGHT SHE WOULD end up a runner up in a numbers game against competitors from five other countries when somebody finished the last puzzle ahead of her.

But when the winners were called, the Filipino teen from Pangasinan was declared

PRINT A4

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Monday, July 14, 2008 ★ 14 sections / Vol. 23 / No. 320 P10 website: www.inquirer.net

For UP boast, judge draws SC reprimand

By Lelia B. Salaverria

JUST BECAUSE YOU are a University of the Philippines (UP) law graduate doesn't make you smarter than others. So says the Supreme Court, in effect.

FOR UP, A6

Solons out to probe all Sulpicio sea mishaps

By Christian V. Esguerra and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE INQUIRER REPORT THAT Sulpicio Lines Inc. has been involved in 45 maritime accidents in its 25 years in operation rankled outrage in the House of Representatives yesterday.

Speaker Prospero Nograles said the ongoing congressional inquiry into the latest of these tragedies—the June 21 sinking of MV Princess of the Stars that cost 800 lives—should be expanded to cover all sea mishaps involving Sulpicio Lines.

Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman, chair of the appropriations committee, said Congress should take over the franchising of shipping lines and cancel Sulpicio Lines' operation.

"This is an act of recidivism on the part of Sulpicio," he told the Inquirer, referring to the summary of accidents involving the company, as recorded in the maritime information database www.lfpdatabase.com and reported by the Inquirer on Sunday.

Since 1980, Sulpicio Lines vessels have reportedly been involved in seven sinking incidents and six collisions with other ships; six had caught fire, seven had engine problems and stalled at sea and 19 had run aground.

SOLONS A17

Sulpicio has own law of the sea

By Amanda Doronila

IN THE WAKE OF THE MULTIple inquiries into the June 21 sinking of the MV Princess of the Stars, its owners, Sulpicio Lines, has so far emerged virtually unscathed.

ANALYSIS

It has not been held to account for the disaster.

The inquiries both in Congress and by government humanitarian authorities during the past two weeks have ruled over the costs state agencies charged with ensuring public safety on maritime travel.

They have allowed Sulpicio Lines officials to get off lightly by focusing on public officials.

MAINSIDE A17

'Antilife pols must be refused communion'

HIGH EXPECTATIONS Some 600 pregnant mothers attend the "Buntis Congress" held in Manila to promote responsible parenting and proper nutrition. The government says 162 mothers die out of 100,000 live births and 32 die out of 1,000 babies born. AFP

Bishop's position disputed by solon

By Lelia B. Salaverria and Christian V. Esguerra in Manila and Jeffrey Tupas Inquirer Mindanao

CATHOLIC POLITIcians who push for abortion should not be allowed to receive Holy Communion because they are "in a situation of sin," according to a top leader of the Catholic Church.

Oriental Archbishop Jesus Dosado has issued a pastoral letter saying that politicians who consistently campaign for and endorse permissive abortion should be taught about the Church position.

Priests should also tell the politicians that, unless they stop their pro-abortion actions, they should not insist on receiving the Holy Eucharist because they will just be denied, Dosado said in a report posted on the website of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP).

Bishop Deogracias Iñiguez, CBCP public affairs office chief, said the CBCP as a whole had yet to discuss the stand on refusing communion to pro-abortion politicians.

ANTILIFE POLS A4

Standing ovation for Lea in historic concert

By Ruben V. Nepales
LA correspondent

LOS ANGELES—SHE HAS LONG MADE her mark as an international artist. Still, it was as if she had captivated a whole new world.

Lea Salonga earned a standing ovation at the end of her historic concert on Friday evening at Los Angeles' iconic architectural landmark and world-class performing arts venue, the Walt Disney Concert Hall.

A sold-out crowd cheered Salonga as she became the first Filipino performer to have a solo show at architect Frank Gehry's lifelessing steel-clad masterpiece.

Through Salonga's crystal-clear voice, Filipino hymn of such OPM standards like "Hahanapin Ko" by Jimmy Santiago Cruzio by Jose Mari Chan), "Sana Maulit Muli" by Gary and Angeli Valenciano, and "Bukit Labis Kinag Mithi" by Alex Mallilit reverberated inside the beautiful wood-paneled hall.

The normally staid venue—home of the world-renowned Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra—came to life as the mostly Filipino audience, encouraged by Salonga, sang along to the Filipino songs.

Salonga's rendition of songs that have distinguished her multi-awarded career, including "Reflection," "I'd Give My Life for You," "On My Own" and "I Dreamed a Dream," earned thunderous applause.

A volunteer from the audience, who identified himself as Cliff, received the evening's first standing ovation. The American, randomly picked by Salonga from the audience, was surprisingly good in singing with the singer her popular duet, "A Whole New World," the Oscar-nominated theme song from Disney's animated hit, "Aladdin."

Backed by an orchestra of 70 musicians, Salonga also made the crowd swoon with her versions of "The Way You Look Tonight," "Someone to Watch Over Me," "Taylor the Latte Boy," "Imagine" and "Everybody Says Don't."

As a preview of her coming show "Cinderella," which opens at the Cultural Cen-

STANDING A18

LEA Salonga's milestone performance draws thunderous applause. RUBEN V. NEPALES

Kcat finds life's beauty beyond pain

By Maria Corgee S. Gomez
Contributor

THE GROWL WAS INCESSANT, indicating her annoyance at the thought that we were talking to us her love life.

Each time Maria Katherine "Kcat" Yerro, 24, makes this sound, interpret it as her means of protest. Neurofibromatosis Type 2 (NF2) has limited her communication with the outside world to growl patterns, hand gestures, lip reading and rare scribbling.

Kcat, a T-shirt designer and consumer reviewer, was diagnosed with NF2 three years ago. It is a rare genetic disease that, according to doctors at the Philippine General Hospital, emerged from the respective lineages of her parents, Madge and Reginaldo.

KCAT FINDS A8

AN EMOTIV headset allows company cofounder Tan Le wearing a headset that senses her smile and wink. AFP

MIND GAMES

Computer headset lets brain control action

SAN FRANCISCO—IT'S MIND over machine: A US high-tech company has created a headset allowing computer game lovers to use their thoughts to move mountains and make objects disappear on screen.

Emotiv, a San Francisco-based startup company that marries neuroscience and computer engineering, said its Epoc gaming headset offered only a glimpse of what the technology had to offer.

"There is no natural barrier from what we can see," Emotiv cofounder Tan Le told Agence France-Press while demonstrating the headset at the firm's office.

"This is the tip of the iceberg for what is possible for us. There will be a convergence of gesture-based technology and the brain as a new interface—the Holy Grail is the mind," Le said.

Gamers will be able to get their hands on the gadget in time for the winter holiday season, according to the company.

The Epoc headset features 16 sensors that press against a user's scalp to measure electrical activity in a brain using electroencephalography. A built-in gyro tracks head movement.

The sensors also register users' moods and facial expressions, merging the data in computer software that "learns" to match readings

COMPUTER A13

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Low pressure trough will cause rain showers and thunderstorms over Metro Manila, the rest of Luzon and Western Visayas. The rest of the country will experience partly cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms, mostly in the afternoon or evening.

Metro Manila	Mostly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Mostly Cloudy
Baguio	Mostly Cloudy	Iloilo	Mostly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Mostly Cloudy	Cebu	Mostly Cloudy
Legaspi	Mostly Cloudy	Tacloban	Mostly Cloudy
Puerto Princesa	Mostly Cloudy	Dipolog	Mostly Cloudy
Catarman	Mostly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Mostly Cloudy
Kalibo	Mostly Cloudy	Davao	Mostly Cloudy
Coron	Mostly Cloudy	General Santos	Mostly Cloudy

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Gov't scrambles to save NorthRail

China threatens withdrawal, suit over cost overruns, breaches of contract

By TJ Burgonio and Tonette Orejas

CLARK FREEPORT—NEWLY APPOINTED President of North Luzon Railways Corp. (NLRC) Edgardo Pamintuan will begin negotiations with Chinese officials this week to try to avert what could be an embarrassing international legal suit over the nonpayment of cost overruns and other "breaches of contract" in the multibillion-peso ($503 million) project.

Former Sen. Franklin Drilon, however, urged the government to terminate the NorthRail project and go after the people responsible for negotiating and implementing what he called "the greatest train robbery in history."

The China National Machinery and Equipment Group Corp. (CNMEC) backed off the NorthRail project in February and has reportedly threatened to take legal action against the government for its failure to pay a cost overrun of $200 million and rectify "significant omissions" in the project.

The $1-km railroad, a flagship program of the Arroyo administration, will link the northern Bulan of Metro Manila with the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport at Clark in Pampanga.

"My transition team will discuss the financial side of the project. They (the Chinese) will do a review of the contract. We will seek all possible avenues and concessions so that we can continue the project," said Pamintuan.

He conceded that their Wednesday parliamentary talks were held last Wednesday and the Chinese government officials were still open to discussing the resumption of the project.

"They want it finished and they voiced the CNMEC and the NLRC on 40 items, and also on 3 amendments this week," said Pamintuan, adding, "Our powers-that-be have a good relationship."

Pamintuan said the NLRC was not immediately seeking a moratorium on the $400 million loan by China for the 84.4-km segment of the railway from Caloocan City to the City of Malolos in Bulacan.

The government drew $149 million of the loan in 2004. Since January 2005, it has reportedly been paying about $400,000 in monthly interest.

The incomplete clearing of obstacles along the tracks and the resulting seven-year delay in completion of the Chinese contract have also angered residents of the Caloocan enclaves.

Another P2B needed

The National Housing Authority has reportedly spent about P6 billion to relocate around 20,000 families from the tracks. But the NHA has said it needs another P2 billion to finish the relocation of 30,000 more families in the Pampanga side of NorthRail.

Drilon, an opposition leader, said he had made information that the Chinese firms had warned that if NorthRail failed to comply with the terms of the contract in 30 days and remedy the breaches in 90 days, it would be forced to terminate the contract.

He said this was contained in a letter dated June 5 to NorthRail by Zhang Jian, director general of CNMEC's International Engineering/Projects.

Complaining that CNMEC had been unable to carry out "significant construction activities", because NorthRail had failed to comply with the terms of the contract, the letter warned that the company " may, without prejudice to the exercise of any other rights or remedies which may be available to it, terminate the contract by giving NorthRail notice to that effect."

In an earlier letter dated May 3, CNMEC executive project manager Hao Jiawei informed then NorthRail president Avendo Barcelona II of the increase in the contract price by $399.4 million. Barcelona resigned on June 1.

The price increase consisted of an $88.45-million adjustment as a result of the "significant variations" in the scope and quantities of work, and $230.77 million additional compensation for the extra costs incurred due to the variations.

Drilon furnished the Inquirer photocopies of CNMEC's letters to NorthRail which he said he obtained from highly reliable sources.

Drilon, who intended to file his inquiry into the allegedly overpriced project in 2006, said the government "should take up the challenge of termination, absorb the loss [of P1.4 billion], but it can again properly throw out after those responsible for the losses."

Otherwise, the government would be "exposing the Filipino people to an obligation [of $892 million] to build only 32 km of railway," Drilon said.

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BIR targets tax evaders to boost collection

By Elmer Kristian Danajon
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—THE GOVERNMENT WILL intensify its campaign against tax evaders and developmental projects to boost its collection base in expected revenue losses as a result of the grant of tax exemptions and subsidies to poor Filipinos, said Revenue Commissioner Lilian Hefti.

"There's a negative effect on our collection because the tax exemptions had gone up. That's why the BIR is now looking at other areas to increase collections," Hefti told reporters here Friday.

"For example, we'll look at tax evaders and those who have poor compliance and are not up to date with paying," she said.

Hefti also said the cash dates Malacañang gives poor Filipinos put a strain on government revenue targets.

The Bureau of Internal Revenue needs to collect P645 billion this year to attain a balanced budget, a target that may be hard to reach, Hefti conceded.

"We are just trying our best to achieve our target," she said.

Asked if the government had considered adjusting the BIR's collection target, Hefti said, "With rising inconsistencies in logistics and target (There has been an announcement yet), We're hopeful that people of (the Cordillera), the people of Baguio, would more efficient in crossing up with additional collections despite that law increasing the exemption given to taxpayers."

She said the BIR would explore ways to attain the target.

President Macapagal-Arroyo in June signed Republic Act No. 9504, granting a tax exemption to minimum wage earners. While the law is expected to reduce by P5.4 billion the yearly government income, it would give minimum wage earners a bigger take-home pay.

The government has also set aside funds to subsidize the agriculture, public transport and education sectors.

In the Cordillera, the government has ordered the release of a monthly P500 stipend and a P900 family subsidy for families with up to three children in Abra and Apayao.

Hefti opened a P3.6-million computer training facility of the BIR regional office here last week. The facility is equipped with 40 computers and audio-visual equipment. It will be used to train BIR personnel in northern Luzon on the integrated tax system (ITS).

The center will also be used to build a BIR nationwide computer network to efficient tax collection, Hefti said. The computerization project is funded with a $21 million grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Hi-tech protest against Neri set

STUDENTS AND teachers were of the weekend said they would launch a text messaging and e-mail campaign to urge employees of private companies to reject the appointment of Romulo Neri to Senate hand of the World Security System.

The militant League of Filipino Students and the Alliance of Concerned Teachers described Neri as a "terribly frustrated" with "zero credibility."

Neri named the ire of violent student and teacher groups when he refused to answer questions on a few who inquiry on President Macapagal-Arroyo's response to his report of a bribe offer to approve the $329-million National Broadband Network deal. He pleaded "executive privilege" in his communications with the President.

Other organizations like Anakbayan, College Editors Guild of the Philippines and National Union of Students of the Philippines said Neri had "lost whatever trace of credibility" he may have had as a career official.

Concurrently, the 170-member Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities (PACU) said it was happy that Neri "after being exonerated" as of the Commission on Higher Education.

Lawyer Gonzalo Duque, PACU president, had called for Neri's replacement, accusing him of "playing dead and blind" to refuse to testify before concerns

Jerry E. Esplanada

Nat'l social welfare plan thrust of GMA Sona

By Christine O. Avendaño and Nikko Dizon

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO IS expected to discuss her newly instituted National Social Welfare Program when she delivers her second State of the Nation Address (Sona) before a joint session of Congress on July 28.

If President Arroyo's Sona in the past two Sonas were the so-called Sona per Regions to spur development throughout the country, this year's Sona will focus on the national social welfare program which is aimed at helping the country surmount the current global crisis of high food and fuel prices, according to Presidential Management Staff chief Jorge Bermudez.

The President has started writing the draft of her Sona, holding daily writing sessions since last week, Bermudez said yesterday.

"The thrust is on the national social welfare program," Bermudez said, referring to President Arroyo's newly created Cabinet cluster that caused a stir after the appointed Bernido Siet administrator of the Social Security System said in charge of the government's pension programs.

The program puts together the program undertakings of the SSS, Government Service Insurance System, Department of Social Welfare and Development, and Department of Health and would cost P45 billion.

Bermudez said Siet had provided "technical inputs" to the program.

In her speech, President Arroyo will report to the people on the state of the nation, particularly the crises of high food and energy costs, and how the government should respond to them and what Congress and other officials should do to help address the problem, Bermudez said.

He said more government subsidies would be on the way and that would be part of the national social welfare program.

Bermudez said President Arroyo would also update the nation on the government's major projects such as its infrastructure programs and the P40-billion FIELDS program, which she launched early this year to boost rice and food production.

A total of 6,200 police, military and traffic personnel will be deployed to the country's capital to maintain law and order during the Sona, a ranking police official said yesterday.

Under Task Force Bayanihan, half of the security forces will be stationed in the Batasan complex, where the President will deliver her speech, Director Geary Barias, chief of the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO), said in a phone interview.

The rest will be deployed in Malacañang and the People Power monument on Edsa, he said.

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'Antilife pols must be refused communion'

From page A1

But it is in the canons of the Church that those who have engaged in abortions and those who have participated in such an act are banned from receiving Holy Communion, Bagues said.

They have to be forgiven first by a bishop before the prohibition could be lifted.

Deanda's pastoral letter came days after the CBCP said it was alarmed by "senseless" bills in the House of Representatives.

Bishop Broderick Pabillo said at a press briefing after the two-day CBCP plenary assembly ended last week that the bishops would lobby against the bills.

Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman, principal author of the reproductive health and population management bill in the House, said Deanda was mistaken in issuing a pastoral letter denying Holy Communion to legislators espousing permissive abortion.

"It begs with, no one among the members of the 14th Congress is espousing permissive abortion, Lagman said.

"It's a grave penalty for a phantom act," he told the bishops, referring to Deanda's pastoral letter.

Lagman said a careful look at his bill would show that "no one is endorsing permissive abortion."

Authored by 48

"They are blinded by their orthodoxy," Lagman said, referring to Church leaders and prolife advocates accusing pro-choice lawmakers of promoting abortion.

"We have repeatedly said in the bill that abortion is illegal, punishable, and not part of the menu for responsible parenthood and population management. The bill [reproductive health bill] is antilife, but it is mutually prolife," Lagman said.

He said his bill had been approved by the committees on health and population and family relations. It is expected to be authored for second reading by the rules committee when Congress returns session on July 28.

The bill—An Act Providing for a National Policy in Reproductive Health, Responsible Parenthood and Population Development—has been coauthored by at least 48 members of the House.

It includes a provision for "mandatory reproductive health and sexuality education," from education should be taught in "an age-appropriate manner ... by adequately trained teachers starting from Grade 5 up to fourth year high school."

The bill also sets aside 10 percent of the "gender and development" budget of all government agencies for the operations of the Commission on Population.

27 abortions per 1,000 women

Data on abortions in the country are based on those the Alan Guttmacher Institute reported last year that nearly half a million women in the Philippines underwent abortions despite pregnancy termination being illegal and taboo.

Reuters said that in 2000, women in the country had more than 473,000 induced abortions, translating to a rate of 27 abortions per 1,000 women. The average rate in the United States was 20.

Reuters also said that most women who had abortions in the Philippines were married, Roman Catholic and had mothered at least three children. The majority terminate their pregnancy because they cannot afford another child.

The Philippine population, which grows 2.31 percent a year, is projected to hit 99.46 million in 2008.

Public unworthiness

The CBCP website quoted Deanda as saying that the decision to refuse communion to proabortion politicians was not a sanction or penalty.

Nor could it be considered equivalent to judging a person's subjective guilt, the bishop said.

Rather, it is a reaction to a person's public unworthiness to receive Holy Communion because of an "objective situation of sin," chapter.net quoted Deanda as saying.

Bishop Bagues explained that a person who is in an objective situation of sin if he paved the way for people to commit abortion, or if he provided opportunities for abortion to be done.

Citing the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts Declaration, "The Canonicity and Divorced, Civilly Remarried Catholics," Deanda said that when persuasion failed to deter proabortion people from trying to receive communion, then the minister should refuse to give it to him.

Lagman said both the government and the Church should find a "common ground" on the population management issue instead of criticizing one another's position on the matter.

The Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development Foundation agreed, saying, "it is time for the Church and the national government to look beyond the usual debate on population and contraceptives."

"They should focus on being not just prolife, but prequality of life, by contributing to the immediate passage of a Reproductive Health and Population Management Policy," the foundation said in a statement.

No room for debate

The Church stand on abortion is clear and leaves no room for debate under other issues, according to Deanda. But all moral issues have the same weight on abortion, he said.

"For example, if a Catholic receives or he or she is not the Holy Father on the decision to wage war, he would not for that reason be considered unworthy to receive himself to receive Holy Communion. There may be a legitimate diversity of opinion even among Catholics about waging war, but not about abortion," he was quoted as saying in the report.

Citing the June 2004 Second Principles of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger Lions Pope Benedict XVI, titled "Worthiness to Receive Holy Communion," the Ontario archbishop said Church of Holy Communion should be a unanimous decision, based on a reasoned judgment that a person was unworthy to receive it.

The practice of a person indiscriminately presenting himself to receive communion but because he is at Mass is "an abuse that must be corrected," Deanda said.

He noted that the minister of Holy Communion could also refuse to give the Holy Eucharist to people who have been excommunicated and those who publicly denounce Church teachings, as those banned by the Church from receiving sacraments.

Poverty leading cause

Lyda Cansen, Gabriela Women's Party-chair in Davao City, said Deanda's notion was out the realities in the country.

"Instead of denying them (Catholic politicians) communion, why doesn't the Catholic Church look for measures to effectively solve the problem?" Cansen asked.

She said Gabriela research had found that poverty was the leading cause of abortion.

"Is it the solution? Why don't we instead get to the root cause of the problem which is poverty? If we can solve poverty, then no mother would be beaten enough to abort her pregnancy," she said.

Shedding will even be the answer to the problem, Cansen said.

She said another reason that women were resorting to abortion was because of the lack of correct education on reproductive health.

In countries where abortion is legal, where the process is safe, there is low incidence of abortion-related deaths, she was noted. "And we don't want women to die," she said.

Fetus in Mass offering

Recently, a priest in the Quiapo Church in Manila, was shocked to find a fetus inside a jar hidden in a basket of fruits offered during the Sunday morning Mass.

"It looked like a 4-month-old fetus. It had hands and feet. There was a rosary inside the bottle, too," Msgr. Gerry Santos said. With Inquirer Research

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Corrections

IN THE JULY 8 ISSUE, a photo caption on Page A21 of the Sports section inadvertently omitted the photo credit. The photo, which was submitted by a La Salle team official as its "evidence" in an IO controversy in the UAAP, was taken by Dixon Mendiola for InSteadSports.com.

IN THE JULY 13 ISSUE, a front-page photo caption misstated the name of the Lacuel family patriarch, who built a three-storey mansion on Illana Boulevard in Mandaluyong City. The patriarch's name is Jose F. Lacuel—not Jose B. Lacuel. The latter is the patriarch's eldest son.

IN "THE SAME ISSUE, a three-page story— "Villars rules over storied Lacuel house on Mister Blvd"—misstated the name of a cousin of former Speaker Jose D. Lacuel. His cousin's name is Emeritus Lacuel Almeda—not Emeritus Lacuel.

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Pinay, 14, tops Asian Sudoku tournament

champion of a Sudoku tournament in the Asia-Pacific in Singapore on Saturday.

The number-placement puzzle challenges players to fill empty blocks in rows by nine squares with the correct digits so that each row, column and gridlined grid have eight cues to nine without any repetition.

"The last puzzle was so difficult. It was an expert-level puzzle and the time limit was 30 minutes. I passed [my finished puzzle before the limit]. Somebody finished ahead of me but...in the middle, she made a mistake," Cua said at the airport yesterday.

All ages

She said she was too shocked. "It was really unexpected," she told reporters upon arriving in Manila yesterday afternoon.

Cua, a second-year high school student at Pamplona Universal Institution, bested some 50 other contestants from China, Malaysia, Thailand, India, host country Singapore and the Philippines in the Sudoku Open's first recognized Asian champion of all ages.

Beating five other Filipino players, Cua took the championship trophy and 20,000 Singapore dollars (more than P700,000), finishing the final puzzle in 15 minutes with all digits correctly entered.

She also took home champion of products from brain stimulation BRAINO's, organizer and host of the Sudoku challenge.

Math trainers' guild

"When it was down to five, the Malaysian contestant finished first so we left we had a second-place. But when all contestants finished the puzzle, the one who submitted first was declared 1[S]t-place because she was incorrect. So we had a champion," said Cua's coach Ed Agolito of the Philippines' Mathematics Trainers' Guild (MTG).

The championship came two years since Cua solved her first Sudoku puzzle, which she encountered through training with the MTG.

Whiz kid

A seventh-year topnotcher in her school, Cua was among math whiz kids that the MTG, an organization of Filipino math teachers, host under 16 years and trained for months in competitions in the Philippines and abroad.

Competing against a crop that included Fellow trainees and professionals, Cua showed a fighting chance ready to the competition, only her second math competition abroad for which she said spend several weeks training.

She played with among 15 players that pushed on to the second round after the convoluted challenge. In the next rounds, she consistently placed first.

Darling of the press

"She became the darling of the press during the marathon competition because she was consistently making first place so all cameras were on her. She was already heading to the finish feeling nervous," Agolito said.

At concern clicked away into the final round, Cua zeroed in on her game as if to ignored intense focus and analysis. It was just her against a game short with 22 digits in the only chart in an 81-block puzzle.

"I relaxed down and I just didn't mind [the people] around me. I just concentrated [on the puzzle]," she told the hostess.

An instant math trainee since third grade, Cua is bound for Singapore again this week for the International Mathematics Competition on July 18.

Responding to a joke on why she didn't just stay in the city since until her next contest, Cua said with a shy chuckle: "Because I have to go to class."

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For UP boast, judge draws SC reprimand

Saying an school had monopoly of knowledge of the law, the high court reprimanded a Cebu-city Regional Trial Court judge who told a lawyer that since the latter did not graduate from the UP College of Law, he and the judge could not be equals.

Reprimand

The court sanctioned Judge Meliol Bolos with a reprimand after finding him guilty of conduct unbecoming of a judge, and warned him that he would be sanctioned more severely if he repeated such an act.

The lawyer, Melvin Mann, had filed a complaint against Bolos over the judge's remark that Mann withdraw the complaint, saying he filed it because of his [unpaid] errors.

But the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA) pursued the administrative proceedings against Bolos.

In its June 30 decision penned by Associate Justice Conchita Carpio Morales, the high court said a lawyer's commission should not be judged based on the law school he went to.

"An alumnus of a particular law school has no monopoly of knowledge of the law," the court said.

"By handing the bar exams, actions which this court administers, taking the lawyer's oath, and signing the Roll of Attorneys, a lawyer is presumed to be competent to discharge his functions and duties as an officer of the court, irrespective of where he obtained his law degree," the court added.

"For a judge to determine the fitness or competence of a lawyer primarily on the basis of his alma mater is clearly an egregious error on argument of an [error]."

Proud MLQU alumnus

Mann's complaint cited the transcript of a Feb. 27, 2006, proceedings in court in which Bolos reportedly said he graduated from the UP College of Law. Mann said he graduated from Manuel L. Quezon University and was proud of it.

Bolos replied: "Then you're not from UP. Then you cannot equate yourself to me because there is a saying and I know this, not all law students are created equal, not all law schools are created equal, not all lawyers are created equal. Despite what the Supreme Court [said] that we all are created equal in His [eyes and universe]."

Explaining to the OCA the circumstances behind their court exchange, Bolos said Mann had filed a motion for Bolos to inhibit himself in a case and that the motion contained a direct insult on his integrity and dignity.

'Insulting, unwarranted'

Bolos said the motion implied that an unfair order he had issued was not based on the merits of the case.

The judge also objected to Mann's request for the audio-visual transcripts of court proceedings, saying it implied that the court was illegally and unlawfully changing the transcripts.

The OCA, in its findings, noted that Bolos did not deny the exchange with Mann and said the judge's "insulting statement" that questioned Mann's capability because the lawyer did not graduate from UP was "unwarranted and unreasonable."

The OCA said that though the statements could be attributed to human frailty, judges should use courteous language and be patient and temperate.

Befitting a gentleman

The high court said the OCA's findings were well-taken and cited more portions of court transcripts in which Bolos asked if Mann was taught in MLQU about a certain principle of law. Bolos even dismissed a court employee to show the lawyer the judge's impression of awards and liabilities among others.

The court said a judge should address the merits of the case and not the counsel's person. It added that if he had his integrity and dignity was attacked, the judge did the correct thing in directing Mann to state why the latter should not be cited for contempt.

But the judge went out of bounds when he "engaged in a reprehensible legal and personal discourse."

"This court has reminded members of the bench that even in the face of boorish behavior from those they deal with, they ought to conduct themselves in a manner befitting professors and high officers of the court," it said.

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'Merger of MILF, MNLF for peace talks a good thing'

By Julie S. Alipala
Inquirer Mindanao

LAMITAN CITY, Basilan—In a merger of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in the offing?

Presidential Peace Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr., who visited the province of Basilan on Friday, said the next administration might include the merger of the two Moro factions.

"In the upcoming peace talks, we are looking forward to the unity of purpose between the MNLF and MILF ... meaning the two fronts agree to sit as one for the agreement," Esperon said.

Unity of purpose

"I cannot imagine two different agreements here. Hindi both parties are for the representation of the Bangsamoro people, merging is all right as we are dealing with the issue of unity of purpose here," he said.

Hadjiel Hasan, a candidate for the regional assembly of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), earlier admitted the MNLF had initiated talks with the MILF on a possible merger during a meeting in Kuala Lumpur in August 2003.

The Kuala Lumpur meeting, Hasan explained, was on the Organic Act which created the ARMM. At the same meeting, the contentious issues besetting the MILF, particularly the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity, were also discussed.

Umbrella group

Hasan said the MILF would want to include areas covered under AF-MM in the juridical entity.

The 2001 meeting also gave birth to the umbrella group of the two fronts, the Bangsamoro Solidarity Movement.

"For [MNLF] premiers here is that provided there is resolution between the MILF and MNLF, then the issue of constitutional process could be resolved under the 1996 peace agreement, provided the MILF and MNLF can coordinate with each other and perhaps sit down together and have our position in negotiating with the Philippine government," Hasan said.

"It may be difficult for the MNLF and MILF to come together to be united. They can remain separate organizations but can have one negotiating position," Hasan added.

He revealed that MILF chair Haji Murad had a "lengthy talk" with Chairman Nur Misuari of MNLF vice chair in Jolo during Misuari's recent trip to Central Mindanao.

Esperon said the peace talks with the MILF would resume this month.

"The process is moving very fast. We have been receiving proposals and counterproposals since June. After some lengthy legal studies, we are positive and we are very optimistic that we might be getting some agreements very soon," he said.

Esperon urged the leadership of the MILF and the MNLF to sit down and "work out among themselves the issue of unity and purpose."

"I can predict that we can reach full peace if they have unity of purpose for the good of the Bangsamoro people," he said.

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Kcat finds life's beauty beyond pain

By Inquirer Staff

Early detection of NF2 may prevent its spread, and Madge Marasa herself for the overnight, saying she became so busy coordinating in the family's keep.

The early signs were the "scars" forming on Kcat's face and arms starting when she was an infant and continuing until she was a teenager. She also slept with her eyes wide open—something the family dismissed as one of her weird antics—and frequently complained of headaches.

Things got so bad that she experienced double vision and severe, throbbing headaches, and the right side of her face became disfigured and eventually paralyzed.

Second opinion

The diagnosis of a Hamilton-based doctor, whom Madge refused to name, was juvenile rheumatoid arthritis leading to polio. But a second opinion sought from doctors at the PGH revealed that Kcat was suffering from NF2.

While a link between skin abnormalities and NF2 may seem odd, the PGH doctors said the disease was the result of a merging of multiple sources of Neurofibromatosis Type 1 (NF1) on either side of the Tuvera family. (Lipomas is said to be the best example of NF1.)

Kcat's parents looked into their respective families for NF2 traces.

Madge found nothing that could be attributed to it. But she had a number of schwannomas removed from various parts of her body, and remembered relatives with skin abnormalities that, she thought, were caused by a misguided application of facial creams.

Her father himself had lumps in his body scraped off, "but nothing so serious that we could directly attribute to NF2."

Although it was uncertain that the Tuvera had NF1 because among their descendants, it was presumed that there were, and that Kcat was the unfortunate recipient of it after generations of blood merging.

Devastated

Madge said they where the brunt of Kcat's condition, she was the most affected: "It was like I was going to die."

She said she was devastated to learn that Kcat had also lost her sense of hearing.

From what Madge gathered from the doctors, the growth of neurological tumors in a certain part of Kcat's cranial nerve damaged her auditory vestibular nerve, which is responsible for transmitting sensory information from the inner ear to the brain.

A cochlear implant was found in each of Kcat's left and right ears, another in her throat, and yet another in her optical eclectic.

Her surgery records show that she has undergone major operations—radiosurgery, neurosurgery, cardiosurgery and insertion of a gastrostomy tube to ease the hard-hearing of food and liquids.

She also had psychiatric treatments for depression after the loss of her hearing. And in between trips to the operating room, she suffered from pneumonia and then-acute complications.

Early dreams

Like other girls her age, Kcat had nurtured vibrant imaginings of a career to suit her liking.

Before she was laid low by her ailment, she had a scenario to go at the College of the Holy Spirit, and she juggled time between Dutch classes, a radio production exhibit, and some 20-plus units to fulfill requirements.

She kept a tight group that did chunky mark in her early school, Ben Bravo Manila, but she spent most of her time at home, leaving her child in place to eat dog.

Kcat is aware of the progress of her friends, who are either raising a family of their own or building down a job, and she is happy to see them during gatherings at their home on Whisper Street in Muntinlupa City.

Part of the left side of her body is now paralyzed, but she regards her disability like it were a mere part of her context and does not look back with regret.

"There's something in our daughter that keeps her moved up every day," said her mother. "She is positive in her outlook, quite a warrior to her sense of mind, and the unfolding of hope never stops flowing. She overcame her situation with formidable spirit, which, perhaps, has refined her sword in her."

Bitterness

Such an attitude is in contrast to her father's.

One recent evening at the Pasta residence, Eduardo did not notice words saying how deeply his daughter's condition had affected him.

His words and voice were bitter as he searched for answers to "why" and "why me," in the process pointing out that others were living full lives despite accomplishing.

"This is entirely not an easy time for us," said Madge, who is herself battling lupus, a disease characterized by an overactive immune system that attacks even healthy cells.

She added: "We are always confronted with hopes and prayers—to swallow ourselves. Our worries are depleted, and my physical limitations also hamper our progress. Everything is calculated with extra effort.

"I worry about that time when I can no longer cope with the demands of taking care of my daughter. I have two other children who will enter their own families, and Kcat will be left alone."

Beauty of life

But despite her parents' apprehensions, Kcat is counting her blessings.

She wrote in her blog: "What am I sick of? I am aware that I got NF2, but I see that as part of me only. (Yeah ako bingi, salamat lang (I am not deaf); I am only in a state of geocentric). Everything happens for reasons, and life is like a Friendster-contact to God (read) why He put me in this condition. I have never questioned life on this.

"It is true that I am suffering inside, but don't you think we should go beyond pain to discover the beauty of life? I constantly smile despite the pain I experience inside."

Kcat was recently fitted with a cochlear implant that made her hear again. She launched her first-ever T-shirt design called MOOS, and made T-shirts for P300, and reportedly made P20,000 last year.

She gets paid by a company in the United States for the occasional reviews she writes—and so that recent evening, she happily clicked away at computer to show off her work.

But hearing her mother speak with undisguised desperation made Kcat somewhat uneasy.

She managed to relay her thanks in Madge's through gestural speech: "Mommy, we will get well. I will do everything that I can despite my disability because He must go on for us."

Let's focus relief efforts on the living, says Gordon

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

PAVIA, ILOILO—SEN. RICHARD Gordon, Philippine National Red Cross chair, called yesterday on the government agencies concerned to refocus relief and rehabilitation efforts on helping the people adversely affected by Typhoon "Frank" instead of concentrating on the sunken MV Princess of the Stars.

"More attention should be given to the living ... to those we can help and save," said Gordon in an interview during the unveiling here of a mass water emergency response unit donated by the Swedish Red Cross.

While efforts to recover the remains of the passengers and salvage the ship should continue, Gordon said more help must be given to the thousands who are still suffering the effects of the storm in Panay, Negros Occidental, Catanduanes, Romblon and other areas.

He said he would suggest to the National Disaster Coordinating Council that priority assistance be given victims who were left homeless without food and livelihood and fishermen whose boats were destroyed.

"The aid that we are getting is not that significant because the nation's attention is focused on the disaster of the sunken ship," he said.

The Office of Civil Defense reported that 242 persons died in Western Visayas alone. Some 200 were still missing and 986 were injured. The flooding affected 2,545 villages and 417,309 families or 2,084,105 persons. At least 58,571 houses were destroyed and 97,100 damaged.

The $300,000 water sanitation facility will provide potable water to Pavia, Iloilo, where 80 percent of the population were affected by flooding.

The facility can process 600 cubic meters of water and supply drinking water to around 48,000 people daily.

Pavia Mayor Amadio Sordilla said the facility can also provide water to neighboring Iloilo City and the towns of Leganes and Sta. Barbara.

The water will be sourced from the Aganan River and distributed in water tanks to the barangays, Gordon said.

TAIWAN DOES IT? Officials of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (Teco), its Philippine counterpart the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (Meco) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development broke ground recently for the erection of the warehouse Teco is donating to the DSWD for relief goods. From left are Teco representative Donald C. T. Lee, Social Welfare Undersecretary Jonathan P. Peñas, Meco director and chief finance officer Ms. Isabel O. Solanco and Meco director Manuel A. Barcelona.

Rains, possible storm in forecast

WIDE SECTIONS OF LUZON WILL EXperience rains and thunderstorms over the next two days with an active low pressure area forming east southeast of northern Luzon, the weather bureau said yesterday.

At 10 a.m. advisory, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said it had monitored the low pressure area 1,110 km east northeast of northern Luzon and moving slowly toward Batanes.

Weather specialist Nancy Abrot said there was a possibility the low pressure area would develop into a tropical depression to be called "Helen" (international name: Hanna).

"Based on our output models, the prognosis is that the low pressure area will intensify on (Tuesday)," Abrot told the Inquirer over the phone yesterday. Jacelyn R. Uy

'Real' disaster response in Asean seen

WASHINGTON—AFTER MUCH DEBATE, Asia is finally expected to agree to hold its first civilian-military disaster relief exercise with key powers like the United States, Japan and the European Union.

This will not the usual for real emergency responses to disasters, such as the recent cyclone that ravaged Burma (Myanmar) and left 130,000 dead or missing as the country's ruling military junta came under strong criticism for blocking aid efforts.

A ministerial meeting on July 28 in Singapore of the Asean Regional Forum (ARF), Asia's top security forum, may agree to hold the disaster relief exercise among its 27 member countries early in 2009, a U.S. official said.

ARF senior officials agreed in May to consider such an exercise that could pave the way for the militaries of the Asean nations, China, India, the US, Russia and EU member states to help coordinate a disaster relief response.

"So I hope that at this meeting, we can move to the next stage—to the point that it is agreed upon and planning begins so that it could actually happen as early as next year," Ellen Tauscher, Under Secretary of Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, told AFP.

"There is genuine interest and enthusiasm for this and the political will is there," he added.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is expected to connect the ARF ministerial talks after skipping the annual gathering in Manila last year, an Asean diplomat said.

Aside from the Asean states of the Philippines, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Burma, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, ARF comprises Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, the European Union, India, Japan, North and South Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Russia, Sri Lanka, East Timor and the US.

ARF, the principal official forum for security dialogue in Asia, adopted a set of guidelines for disaster relief cooperation at the Manila talks last year.

It also agreed to terms of reference for a troika comprising the incoming and previous ARF chairs and a non-Asean member to quickly convene during an emergency for decision-making.

Marciel cautioned that certain "technical issues may get in the way" of a multi-ARF disaster relief exercise.

"They include sensitive issues such as the 'military of one country operating in another country,'" one State Department official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"There is a need to have agreement on that. Don't there has been a lot of work done already on this in ARF," Marciel said. AFP

Focolare Movement elects new president

THE WORLDWIDE Focolare Movement, with active communities in 182 countries, elected a new president on July 6 at its headquarters in Castelgandolfo in Rome, following the death in March of its founder, Chiara Lubich.

Maria Voce, 71, was elected during the movement's general assembly by 490 voting delegates from all over the world. She won a clear collaborator with Lubich.

The manner of Focolare stipulate that the presidency of the movement should be a lay woman in possession of the group's Marian profile and the movement's predominantly lay nature. Its official name is the Church is Work of Mary.

A representative of a Focolare priest—is also stipulated in the statutes. Fr. Giancarlo Bregantini has been elected to the position.

The results of the election were immediately communicated to Cardinal Stanislaw Rylko, president of the Pontifical Council for the Laity at the Vatican.

In giving the official confirmation of those elected, Rylko expressed the wish that lives and Spirit "may carry out in a

PAMBA VOICE

fruitful manner their tasks in absolute fidelity to the charism received from Chiara Lubich, as in following the ideal of unity, which is the ardent desire expressed by Jesus, and the primary goal of the movement."

Voce was born in Ajello Calabro, Italy on July 30, 1937. She has known the Focolare since 1959 and has lived in the communities of the Focolare for 44 years. Having studied Theology and Canon Law, she was involved during those past years in the recent updating of the general statutes of the movement.

She is also one of those responsible for "Communion and Law," a network of professionals and academics who are involved in the field of law—a newer offshoot of the Focolare Movement.

She is a member of the Abba School, an interdisciplinary center of studies in the Focolare. She lived in Turkey for 30 years where she worked closely with the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople between 1978 and 1988, as well as with the present Orthodox leader, Patriarch Bartholomew I, and with leaders of other Christian churches and with the Muslims world.

Appeals court stops rehab of steel firm

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE COURT OF APPEALS has terminated rehabilitation proceedings for the financially troubled Steel Corp. of the Philippines, saying that since both SCP and its creditor, Banco de Oro-EPCI Bank, had divergent stands on the issue, the rehabilitation plan could no longer be implemented.

In its 34-page ruling, the appellate court set aside the Dec. 3, 2007, decision of the Batasan City Regional Trial Court which approved the rehabilitation plan for the steel firm and which mandated all parties to comply with the provisions of the rehabilitation plan.

The appellate court said that while Banco de Oro-EPCI Bank's opposition to the rehabilitation plan approved by the Batasan RTC was "not manifestly unreasonable," ordering the modification of the plan would mean that it could not be implemented in accordance with its terms, conditions and assumptions.

"After a careful examination of the evidence on record, this court deems it wise to terminate the rehabilitation proceedings since the rehabilitation plan may no longer be implemented in accordance with its terms, conditions, reservations or assumptions," the court ruled.

It also said the rehabilitation plan had not been implemented at all, and added that the interim rules did not provide for a midterm situation wherein the debtors and creditors are years locked in prolonged litigation that was not to their benefit.

It pointed out that rehabilitation was intended to enable a cash-strapped company to continue its activities, restore its formerly successful operations and solvency, and allow them to pay their debts in full.

"Unfortunately, none of these objectives will be achieved in the rehabilitation plan approved by the RTC. Hence, the conclusion of rehabilitation proceedings is proper," it said in a July 3 decision penned by Justice Ruth Kikilan Ibay.

Banco de Oro-EPCI earlier questioned several portions of the approved rehabilitation plan, such as the one stating that the interest of fresh equity infused into SCP shall be 91.672 percent instead of the P3.1 to P5.5 billion recommended by the rehabilitation receiver to enable it to reduce its debt burden.

Banco de Oro-EPCI observed the rehabilitation plan should state that there must be an intermediate conversion of debt to common shares to the required amount of P3 billion, which is equivalent to 34 percent of SCP.

SCP, for its part, questioned the rehabilitation plan's provision for debt-to-equity conversion and said it was easier for the bank to take over the company.

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ROYAL BRUNEI

Lacson: Accusation of Dacer children unfair

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

SEN. PANFILO LACSON yesterday said it was "unfair" of the children of the late publicist Salvador "Bubby" Dacer to accuse him of being the mastermind of their father's murder eight years ago.

Lacson questioned the timing of one of Dacer's daughters's revelations in court.

"It is so unfair. They are not just introducing, there are diversity accusing me of being the mastermind," the opposition senator said in an interview over radio dzBB.

One of Dacer's daughters, Sabrina Reyes, testified at the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 167 that her father had told the family on two occasions that if anything happened to him, it would be Lacson's doing.

Dacer and his driver, Emmanuel Corbito, were abducted on Nov. 4, 2000, while he was on his way to a meeting with former President Fidel V. Ramos. Their vehicle and burned bodies were later found in Imbang, Cavite.

Reyes claimed that Lacson was peeved as Dacer for supporting former Sen. Roberto Lastimoso's bid for the top post of the Philippine National Police (PNP).

She also revealed the contents of her father's letter to President Joseph Estrada in which Dacer endorsed Lastimoso for the top PNP post and recommended sacking a media entrepreneur against Lastimoso and Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno.

Lacson said that he never competed with Lastimoso for the leadership of the PNP.

"He was PNP chief in 1999 and I recommended him to President Joseph Estrada. I was PNP chief in 2000 after Lastimoso and (former PNP chief Edgardo) Lacuna. The content of their accusation is wrong because I never lobbied for the post, not even with President Joseph Estrada," explained Lacson, who said his refusal for the post was the only blemish in Bureau of Investigation chief Reynaldo Wycoco.

He said he knew Dacer and their sons as friends were. "Now, if Lastimoso got him as his PI, more at the time, we will talked and he (Dacer) told me that it was not work."

Lacson said Lastimoso Rep. Luis "Baby" Asistio and the late columnist Adrian Cristobal had called him up and asked him to help search for the missing Dacer.

"I responded in a manner that was appropriate for a law enforcement official—I ordered the CIDG (Criminal Investigation and Detection Group) to conduct an investigation. It was not just highlighted," he said.

Lacson said he did not see Dacer's letter to Estrada and questioned why Dacer's children waited eight years before revealing its contents.

"I'm sorry, been indicted or investigated. There was a Senate investigating the 2001 campaign. Why did they not speak out then, if that was their intended order?" he said. "With all the resources of the government, I should have already been indicted in that case."

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GE imagination at work

We're ready to give up sisters—Army

By Nikko Dizon

THE PHILIPPINE ARMY YESTERDAY SAID it would refer the case of 17-year-old Reina Gamacory to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) following the testimony of her mother, Maria, and the militant human rights group, Karapatan, that the military release Reina and her elder sister Rose Ann.

"The Philippine Army is not forcing the sisters to stay at the Army hospital or to reside in its custody and is willing to comply with the recommendation of the (DSWD) as opposed to Bulatao," said Lt. Col. Romeo Brawner in a statement.

In a phone interview, Brawner said the Army "still stands by our statement that we did not force them (to go to the Army). The truth is we want to turn them over to other legal agencies, the (DSWD) to Bulatao and maybe the Commission on Human Rights for Rose Ann."

Brawner said that when Rose Ann, 21, appeared at a press conference in Army headquarters on July 10, the military had requested the presence of representatives from the DSWD and the CHR.

But only officials from the GMA National Capital Region office came to the press conference.

Brawner said Bulatao remained confined at Fort Bonifacio General Hospital until Gamacory recovers.

He criticized Rose Ann's statement at the press conference that she and Reina had not been abducted by the military but escaped from their Karapatan safehouse and sought help from soldiers (Rose Ann) had befriended while confined at the AFP Medical Center after an encounter in April.

Rose Ann and Reina are daughters of Eddie Gumanoy, chair of the Kilusang ng Sambayang Magbubukid in Timog Katagalugan (Samata-TK), who was killed along with human rights activist Eden Marcellana in the dawn (Second in 2007).

Pre-need clients want case revived

PRE-NEED PLANHOLDERS OF THE PIONEER Group (TPG) have asked Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez to reconsider their pending petition for review seeking the revival of the criminal case they filed against LBC Development Corp.

Professional Plantsitters Association Inc. president Jose Orlando Rule said in a June 30 letter to Gonzalez that the group was hoping for a speedy resolution of the case so that they could recover their investments.

The Mandaluyong City prosecutor's office recommended in January the filing of estafa charges against LBC officials for allegedly failing to remit to the financially-troubled TPG the payments made through LBC by Filipinos overseas.

LBC, which was tapped by TPG to be its collecting agent for the pre-need firm's planholders abroad, allegedly failed to remit P661.1 million to TPG.

But on appeal by LBC, the Mandaluyong prosecutor's Office reversed itself and dismissed the complaint filed by the pre-need firm's planholders.

The planholders questioned the latest ruling in a petition for review filed before Gonzalez in March.

In the letter to Gonzalez sent last month, Rule said the TPG's 30,000 planholders were seeking justice and the recovery of their investments.

"We are making an earnest appeal to your honorable department to resolve with reasonable dispatch TPG's appeal for in so doing justice will be served TPG's thousands of academic and planholders who invested their hard-earned money for a better and secure future," Rule said.

Lolita B. Ackerman

THE SMOOTHY Epoc headset, created by a start-up company that marries neuroscience and computer engineering, is expected to be out in the market before yearend. AFP

Computer headset lets brain control action

Paragraph 1

with what people are thinking, according to Le.

"There is a direct correlation between thought and what happens on screen," Le said. "It really fulfills this long fantasy people have had of moving objects just with thought."

A video game will be included with the headset when the package goes on sale for $299 at the Emotiv website and select shops.

The martial arts fantasy game has a wand Ashen wearing the animated "master" lords players through exercises that initially fling mountains with their minds.

Training

A test of the headset showed that after "training," the Epoc system let less than a minute, one could spin, push, pull and lift objects onscreen, or make them vanish by simply thinking about it.

"Gamers are ready adoption of technology and thought control is the ultimate fantasy of gamers," Le said.

Emotiv has a software development kit available in video game makers as well as programmers of "anything that involves a human and a computer" including those involved in virtual worlds, cars and medical care.

The technology could be used to let virtual world characters referred to as "avatars" reflect the real-world expressions and moods of the people they represent online, according to Emotiv engineer Marco Del la Torre.

The kit for third-party software users to create brought control to programs has reportedly been downloaded from the Emotiv website more than 3,000 times.

"We have a lot of features with consumer interested," Le said.

Polygraph

Even law-enforcement agencies have expressed interest in the headset's ability to read people's minds.

"It certainly could be used as a very accurate polygraph," Le said. "If you have seen something before, there is no hiding it. There is brain recognition."

Medical applications could include giving stroke victims or people in coma new ways to communicate.

People wearing headsets while listening to online music could have songs automatically tagged based on whether they made them happy, sad, excited or bored.

In, an invention telecommunications entrepreneur who was named Young Australian of the Year in 1998, said the idea for the headset sprang from a chat about brains and technology during dinner in 2003.

Le and fellow entrepreneurs Nam Do founded Emotiv with neuroscientist Allan Snyder and computer chip designer Neil Weste.

AFP

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER Est. 23 Nov. 1985

OPINION

MV Scandalous

THE LIST OF ACCIDENTS SUSPICIO LINES HAS figured in makes for chilling reading. According to Lloyd's of London, Sulpicio ships have been involved in 48 accidents since 1980, including seven sinkings. (The complete list can be downloaded as a file at http://www.inquirer.net/verbatim/table.pdf.)

EDITORIAL

The seventh, of course, was the sinking of MV Princess of the Stars last month, at the height of typhoon "Frank." Lloyd's, the world's leading clearinghouse of maritime information, estimated the casualty toll of the latest accident at "350 dead and 700 missing."

Each death, each missing person claim, was avoidable, if government authorities or the shipping line's management itself had recognized the company's safety record for what it was: a scandal, an outrage. We have raised this question before, we raise it again: If an airline had this kind of record, would it still be in business?

We do not need to dwell on the seven engine-trouble accidents involving these ships. (We cannot but note, however, that one stalled ship, the Filipina Princess, was "stranded for 3 days.")

The record of fires breaking out on board is a little more worrying. Four of the six incidents happened in the last eight years; a fire struck the ill-fated Princess of the Orient several months before the ship capsized (in the middle of a storm); in 2003 a fire on the Bello Princess was so severe it caused the ship to roll over. No casualties were reported then, but the vessel was declared a total loss.

The record of Sulpicio ships running aground is even more disturbing. In 28 years, the fires has suffered 19 groundings, including four ships that motored so much damage they were subsequently declared a total loss. At least two ships ran aground during typhoons. One ran aground and caught fire.

The record of collisions does not hold confidence either: A Sulpicio Liner vessel has collided with another ship six times since 1990; a collision has occurred every two or three years.

It is the record of such ships, however, that proves that Sulpicio Lines does not deserve its franchise. In particular, the sinking of three ships in the middle of a typhoon—one every 10 years, quite literally—tells us that the shipping company has failed the basic test of common carriers. To ensure the safety of its passengers.

We've said this before; we'll say it again. After Doña Marilyn sank in 1980, while sailing in the middle of a typhoon ("Didoy") and claiming 150 lives, and after Princess of the Orient sank in heavy seas in 1998 (during typhoon "Vicki") and claiming 150 lives, why did Sulpicio allow its flagship Princess of the Stars to set sail in the middle of typhoon "Frank"?

Its safety record should have told Sulpicio to wait the storm out. (As we've noted, at least two other Sulpicio vessels were involved in an accident while sailing during a typhoon.) Its failure to do so can only mean that leaving the waters accident record among the country's major shipping lines did not mean a thing to Sulpicio management. If they get away with murder before, what's another storm, another sinking?

It is true that suspending Sulpicio's franchise would cause some economic dislocations, but that is the price we have to pay, the price we should have paid many years and thousands of lives ago, to protect the public. That we seem to lack the political will to do so (as we wrote yesterday and we write again today) "all points to a culture that confirms non's own interests with the public good."

Abuses by majority directors in corporations

THE TASK FORCE CHARGED WITH INVESTIGATING the accused MR Pioneer of the loans off the coast of Siburan Island is not clear. It said it would take from three to six months to refloat it and take out the deadly pesticide cargo in its hold and the hundreds of dead passengers trapped inside. But the ship could be considered a total loss, which would make shareholders—the public, long-suffering, and the state can go would have spilled and poisoned the surrounding seas, posing serious danger to marine and human life.

It cannot even decide whether to refloat it: where it is now or tow it out to sea where it would be refloated and its dead and deadly cargo recovered. Meanwhile, at least a dozen more typhoons are expected. It is now resting upside down on a shelf and may fall down the deep abyss where it would then be very difficult or impossible to salvage it or recover its cargo. If it is caught by a typhoon in the high seas, it may sink and its deadly load, Otto Ilitis, the land of pesticide would surely leak and pollute several areas of the sea.

In mid-June of 1981, about 120 pounds of endosulfan, the same deadly cargo that the Sulpicio ship Doña Marilyn carried, killed 40 million fish in the Rhine River in a 200-mile stretch, up to Rotterdam. Today there are 30 tons of endosulfan inside the Princess of the Stars. If the cargo leaks, and how.

I think that our laws must be strengthened to prevent abuses being done by majority members of boards of directors of corporations against minority stockholders, and the regulatory agencies, like the Securities and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas must assume powers to supervise and prevent abuses by majoritarians and banks. The glaring examples involve minority shareholders of the Philippine Banking Club Inc. (PBCI) and Metrobank.

In the case of the PBCI, minority stockholders will lose the value of their shares unless the board, in spite of restraining orders issued by the Court of Appeals, decided the courts and reorganized its most prized asset, its huge race track, for a shell company with no assets and no staff. Its assets/liabilities are very complex, one Malaysian who ostensibly took over a big Thai corporation, using a similar modus operandi, but broke to save lasting changes in Thailand's, and the other a Chinese group linked to the collapse of Beaumont bank (whose depositors have not been paid until now, and whose officers are still out on jail).

In the case of Metrobank, we have seen how the Lopez group climbed on SEC order dropping a stockholders' meeting and were elected with the meeting, despite protests from its partners, the Government Service Insurance System and other government financial institutions who held almost as much equity as the Lopez group. In both cases, lawyers of the offending parties tie up the cases in the courts, using the notoriously slow rebuffs of justice to delay resolution of the cases.

The latest addition is the case of Blackstone Healthcare Corp., whose minority stockholders were denied the right of first refusal in the sale of 60 percent of the corporation's stocks, forcing the minority to file cases in court and with the BSP Monetary Board. Here is a background of the controversy:

The transaction covered the sale by Banco de Oro (BDO) last Dec. 18, 2007 of its 120,000 shares, representing 60 percent of total shares of Blackstone Healthcare Corp. BDO's offer had the following conditions:

1. It was to be a block sale—an "all or nothing" basis.

2. One-time payment of the P176 million (50 percent premium) value of the stocks, in cash or cleared funds upon consent of the stockholders.

In accordance with the "Right of First Refusal" provision in the Stockholders Agreement, BDO had to serve notice of its intention to sell its shares to the other stockholders and to all the corporate stockholders of the company.

By virtue of this provision, Blackstone had the first option to purchase, which it should exercise within 45 days. But the company waived its right. So the right passed on to the other original stockholders. In turn, those who wish to buy the shares must exercise the option within 90 days and Notice of Acceptance of the offer must be given to the Securities and Exchange (SEC) in this case/ of Blackstone and to all the other non-buying stockholders.

It is this "Right of First Refusal" which serves as the basis for the complaint filed last April 24, 2008* by former Bataan Rep. Felicito Payumo, also former chair of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, together with former Instructor Commissioner Benjamin Santos, both among the original stockholders of Blackstone.

Basically, the case revolves around the alleged violations by the bank and its officers of the corporation's "Right of First Refusal" when BDO unilaterally rescinded and revoked its former verbal contract covering the sale and transfer to them of the said shares.

For a better appreciation of the case, here is a chronology of the facts after BDO's disclosure of its intention to sell its shares:

1. On Dec. 18, 2007 at exactly the 30-day deadline, several stockholders availed of their right of first refusal. BDO recognized three of them—Payumo, Santos and lawyer Eduardo delos Angeles. The trustee signified their intention to buy the 120,000 shares through separate letters, all dated Dec. 3, 2007. In BDO corporate secretary Jose Paulo Z. Pano.

2. On Dec. 3, 2007, the bank informed the Payumo group that, subject to the Stockholders Agreement of Feb. 14, 1996, "BDO will immediately execute in favor the sale documents covering the said shares, provided BDO received payment of P175 million in cash or cleared funds in the BDO Savings Account ... on or before Dec. 5, 2007." The letter was signed by Erlanter C. Sutes, the BDO representative. (To be continued)

Lessons in life

THERE'S THE RUB

Comrades de Quiros

A FEW WEEKS AFTER THE MSN SCANDAL exploded on this country, I wrote this:

I don't know who's going to happen next the next few days or weeks, but I do know one thing. The people who are responsible for this evil get away with it again, then heaven help Any knows do. One is tempted to say heavenly Army Set as well, but why should heaven help those who will not help themselves? They get away with this again, and Arroyo's enemies will not only have gone in vain—and what a sacrifice it is, one for of us will ever be able to take it to heart—it will add murderer dimensions to the adage that no good deed ever goes unpunished. Those people get away with this again, and we will have delivered Lozada to the scaffold.

I had been blessed with omniscience, I'd have added: I don't know who's going to happen next the next few days or weeks, but I do know one thing. The people who are responsible for this get away with it again, then God help us. One is tempted to say God help Some Set as well, but God in the form of GMA dressed particularly mind-boggling evil and forgive those who forgive themselves. They get away with this and Meds chameleon display of uriniqueness will not only not have been in vain—and what a shame, less display it is, one the most spineless of us will be hard put to do in 10 lifetimes—it will add whole new dimensions to the proposition that in this country no deeds ever goes unrewarded. Those people get away with this again, and we will have delivered Necrophilia.

Those are the very things we're seeing now. Lozada is reaping the bitter harvest of telling the truth, not least about himself and notably about his supposed reluctance in managing the books: his higher ups were putting on Ham de la Cruz's head. Elsewhere in the world, those selfsame circumstances are taken in favor of the self-incrimination, particularly where they are given voluntarily with a view to pinning down the main culprits. In this country, they are used to pin down the confessor of petty crimes and to exonerate the committers of epic ones.

From the other side, Meds is reaping the sweet harvest of hiding the truth, if not down right telling lies, most importantly about his best friend's position in putting the biggest bullet in Jose de la Cruz's head. He refused to answer those questions that would have implicated GMA in the MSN deal, citing executive privilege. Which most of the Supreme Court justices upheld, not including its supremely wise but supremely beleaguered Chief Justice, Reynato Puno, thereby appraising the citizen that henceforth robbing this country is a privilege of the Chief Executive. For that, Sec) has been amply rewarded.

From someone ever, he went on to become head of the Commission on Higher Education and now head of the Land Bank of the Philippines. He disengaged its current head, Gerardo de la Paz, who apparently had fallen into disfavor because of her association with the Makati Business Club, an organization that does not consider itself an NGO. Offering added proof that, in this country, clean deeds never pay, only crime does—and very well indeed.

There is one thing to be happy about in Neri's repairing to the NSC. That is that he is leaving the CHR, even if I now pity the employees of the private sector who are paying the price for Neri's failure to leave the CHR. You already have Winston Garcia in the DBM, now you have Neri in the NSC. Maybe Neri himself will not see his new office as shaped like a tomb, but he won't be able to prevent his benefactors from doing so, the second time.

But The very good he is leaving an institution dedicated to education, and a higher one at that, because he has no business being associated with anything that has to do with human rights. He's not qualified to rule by rule of his miserable manager of failed going to hell for arming for his sins and for going to heaven for treating in them offer a lesson in self-respect: ignorance of this country would want to be spared. It cannot be a comfort for this nation that the one person presiding over its higher learning is one who teaches that the best way to get ahead in life is to succumb to evil.

I remember again in this respect Khalilan Secretary Jesli Lapus stopping Lozada from meeting the committee on the ground that provision should be insulated from politics. What's wrong with that of course is that you can never insulate the campuses from politics, you can only try to assure that the campuses get wind of principled politics. You can never prevent students from being influenced more by Lozada than by Neri. You can never prevent young minds from having to make decisions about right and wrong, you can only try to assure that young minds are able to tell right from wrong.

The cheating in the nursing exams clearly shows how negative examples impact on schools, whether you allow the Lozadas of this world to talk there or not. Cheats who led the nurses in that path.

Indeed, more than this, what's wrong with this is that the schools are not located only in Diliman and Iloilo, they are located everywhere in this country, they are located in the heart of this country, the whole nation is one big school and its leaders, or those who present those leaders to the public, are the country's top-of-the-line professors. The citizens learn their lifelong lessons from the examples and story lines set by their self-styled betters, whether they are in fact better or worse. Now, ask yourself what lesson, pulsated or muted, pirated or plagiarized, we are presently getting from schools now looking at a still jail term and Neri basking in a still, still, drinks of lunch.

Evil is good and good evil?

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Neri vs Senate remembered

WHEN THE DECISION IN NERI VS SENATE came out last March, one question that students asked was whether the decision could be an interesting one for lawyers to javelinize in Executive Secretary Ermita's legislinated the enforcement of the 1973 Constitution.

In javelinize the Supreme Court owed it to mental law firms, who use to feel the Court cur underneath the bridge defenses.

The most intriguing factor in javelinize was that mental rule was in rigorous effect when it came out. Defiance of the libertas proclamation declaring the 1973 Constitution ratified would not have survived the dismantling of the 1935 constitution. Martial rule was going full speed. Congress had already been closed and hundreds were in detention. Javelinize was a contender in settled might.

Neri vs Senate was something else. It was a dismissal of the executive privilege pleaded by Neri. So interesting arguments if the Court had decided against Neri, the President, who pretended to request for the judiciary, would have bruised. But it was the Court that bowed. As Gen. Jose Calimlim said, she is the luckiest institution.

But all may not be what it seems. The case is still under reconsideration, even if many are now wondering what could be causing the delay in the Neri ruling. While we await the final decision, it may be useful to recall the main controversies in the case.

Recall when proclaimed it all. Neri had been asked three explosive questions: (a) Whether the President followed up the ZTE project; (b) Whether the President directed him to pressure the ZTE; (c) Whether the President said to go ahead and approve the project after being told about the alleged bribe. Neri hid behind executive privilege, specifically under what is called "presidential communications privilege."

Under the late whatever claims "presidential communications privilege" must show good and valid reasons related to the public welfare. But neither any effort to look into the underlying substance of the claimed privilege, the Court upheld the Neri claim. This, in spite of the fact that, during the oral arguments, how the lawyers professed not to know what was behind the claim. The implication, therefore, was that since the claim of "presidential communications privilege" is made, no evidence is needed to support it even if there are legitimate reasons calling for disclosure.

Beyond this doctrinal shipwreck, the decision also made other pronouncements which have the effect of impairing constitutional prerogatives of Congress. For instance, the Court ruled that the Senate may not pass a resolution to withdraw previously granted the privilege unless the member required for a quorum. The Court ignored an earlier and wiser decision which had ruled that "the rules adopted by deliberative bodies are subject to revocation, modification or waiver at the pleasure of the body adopting them" and that "parliamentary rules are merely procedural, and with their observance, the courts have no concern. They may be waived or disregarded by the legislative body." Will the Court sensitive the have pronouncements in Neri which presumptive to tell the Senate how it should run its business?

Another pronouncements of the Court was that the Senate should have given in advance the questions it would ask. This was a suggestion already made in the earlier case of Senate vs Ermita. But what was a suggestion in Senate vs Ermita was declared to be a mandatory requirements in Neri. The requirement of advanced questions is found in Section 22, but the hearing Neri was before was governed by rules under Section 21. There is no such requirement in Section 21, in effect the pronouncement attempts to amend the Constitution and to another incursion into the domain of the Senate.

Another controversial issue is the requirement of the publication of rules for the conduct of hearings. It is true that the present Constitution now requires publication of the rules for hearings. But the Constitution does not specify how the rules must be published. Certainly with the development of information technology today there are various ways of effectively communicating information. Publication in the manner is one of them. In addition to this, however, the Court seems to have said that, every time new matters are encountered, Congress must publish. That was not given for this is that the Senate is not a continuing body, that is, upon the expiration of the term of 12 senators effectively there is no Senate because the remaining 12 do not constitute a quorum.

I find this difficult to understand. The Senate as an institution does not die upon the expiration of the term of 12 senators. And the work of the Senate does not vanish into thin air when 12 new seats were to reach the same way that senators elected in May 2007 will not be sworn in until Congressional Senators are not republished every time there is a new Congress. Orders are ordinances periodically republished. Even the material law presidential decree remains until repealed by Congress or declared unconstitutional. Similarly rules of any Senate should disappear only if adopted by the newly formed Senate.

Even as this Neri is once again from page boards, I am still hoping that the final result of the reconsideration of Neri vs Senate will be less unhappy.

The crown jewel of our foreign service

WHILE WE CONTINUE TO OPEN NEW EMBASSIES AND consulates abroad, this program has been made to acquire an appreciation from the planned property which houses our embassies and chanceries in foreign lands. As such, we envision to put controls for buildings that serve as the residences and offices of our foreign service personnel. It is a most impressive proposition for the Filipino taxpayer, considering that from time to time we have to foot the bill for construction, repair and repair of the facilities.

REVEILLE

Ramon J. Farolan

I don't have the complete list of embassy and consular property-owned that are owned by the Philippine government but for my curious sense of them. We have holdings in Washington, D.C., Paris, London, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Jakarta and Tokyo.

In the case of Jakarta, Indonesia, my father Ambassador Modesto Farolan served as its envoy, ending his term at the death of the diplomatic corps. During his time, he was instrumental in the purchase of two pieces of prime property on Imam Bonjol Street, also known as Embassy Row in those days. One served as the residence of the ambassador and the other, just a short distance away, was our chancery.

When I was a young journalist in Jakarta after he passed away I occupied the same residences and offices as my father. I distinctly recall that when I first entered his bedroom, I could smell the aroma of cigar smoke. My father was a heavy cigar smoker and at some time in their marriage, my parents had to have their bedroom redecorated to eliminate the smell that stained the walls of cigars. The same was true when I moved into his office... the aroma of cigar smoke hung heavy over the room. And we think that he had been away for more than 10 years.

Incidentally, it was from this residence that an Indonesian provocateur once waded on me and then, led by police escort, accompanied me to the Dutch Palace for my presentation of credentials to President Sukarno. And, like the father figure that he was often described as being, Sukarno stared that he had farewell to my father and now he welcomed his son.

Indeed, we have many of these in the Philippine service to promote. In some cases, if not all, the property on which their foreign service establishments are located, by rentals, the residences of the Indonesian ambassador is in the center of Forbes Park, near to that of the Thai and United States envoys. It was acquired in the early years of Indonesian independence when real estate in Makati was relatively cheap.

In fairness to our Department of Foreign Affairs, I am told that from time to time recommendations have been made to purchase facilities abroad for diplomatic purposes. But unfortunately the Congress has not been favorable to the acquisitions of these national acquisitions and appropriations laws not been forthcoming. Perhaps, if we are table even just one-half of the travel money allowed to our lawmakers each year, our annual budget together enough funds for a few more permanent foreign facilities.

Now the case of the Tokyo embassy is another matter.

The official residence of our ambassadors to Japan is located on a 6,361 square meter piece of property in Yubari, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo. The current envoy is Domingo Siazon Jr., who served as foreign secretary during the Ramos and Estrada administrations. He is considered the foreign service expert on Japan.

The Yubari property was built by Baron Zenjiro Yasuda, founder of the Yasuda zaibatsu, as his residence in 1920. Baba Doi, minister of the Bureau Aoki Cabinet, is a ground-breaking ceremony.

On March 21, 1944, the property was bought by President Jose P. Laurel of the Second Philippine Republic. It has been the residence of Philippine ambassadors since the time of Jorge Vargas. Former President Benigno Aquino and his wife were the only presidential couple to stay in the residence since the Laurel days.

Let me provide additional information about this historic-laden residence. It has a Diplomatic Office Room for receiving guests done in beautiful Syrian architecture with several oil paintings of old friends. The main dining room opens a long table from one to the other. Philippine Embassy capacity of nearly 20 persons. It also has a western room and an excellent acoustic system and a beautiful rose balcony. Perhaps, the most precious part of the residence is the garden with its wide variety of azaleas, camellia and ranges from imported from Shimla in 1903) and the sacred aquarium newly formed in Japan because it is very difficult to grow orchids.

Recently there have been proposals to demolish this historical residence in accordance with plans to redevelop the Yubari property with a 21-story structure that would house both private and official residences and offices. The latter is apparently to generate more government revenues for economic development efforts.

While we need to maximize utilization of our resources abroad, we must also make sure that in the process we do not demolish a historical structure that is connected and heritage with the Philippines. Once we tear such a structure, he has to some permanent.

The Philippine Ambassadors Residences led by Ambassadors at the Surigao and Marietta Laurel IV have written the President expressing the reservations of the group regarding the proposed demolition. Ambassador Siazon has written Thai's Presidential Decree No. 1069 dated July 31, 1979 which specifically requires prior written permission from the chairman of the national historical institute before repair or demolition of any national shrine can be done. Other questions concerning assistance of diplomatic immunity as well as economic problems have been raised.

Ambassador Siazon has also voiced his objections to the proposal to development plans, citing the need the "for historic residence to be preserved as part of our national patrimony." In the end, however, Siazon, like the true diplomat that he is, says he is open to alternative proposals for a separate residence for the ambassador, suitable but the preservation of the present one.

Unfortunately if we go by recent events, all these values may not be enough to save the residence—especially if the right "commissioner" are roughed up...and we might just see the crown jewel of our foreign service history lost to the Filipino people.

* * *

The issue is a heightening list of ambassadors who have written their resume to Ambassador Jasmin. If Jasmin who served as our envoy to Hungary, India and South Korea. "Why be an ambassador?" is the title of his memoirs.

Ambassador Jasmin says: "It's life is not easy, which leg-ends are made. It is a modern story of self-fulfillment ... of a poor man from the province who dreamed of going places, literally and professionally and achieving both." Those dreams provide the answer to the question why he became an ambassador.

The trifling Filipino?

IF SHOULD BE I DEEMED MEGALOMANIAC WHEN we are told that the favorite pastime of the Filipino people is to laugh at their leaders. Aside from elections, nothing excites the Filipino more than gossip, according to the canon of a national unit may mean that we have succumbed to the possibility of a base pursuit of senseless.

But the reality is astonishing, especially when it comes to the ridicule of the highest officials of the workplace. I was fascinated how my graduate school class analyzed the crisis of confidence in the workplace, that is, the act of bandying out as well as mixed signals to one's work mates. It was interesting to note that the secret of effective communication that one had addressing to the immediate rule. One student, a public school teacher, narrated how she had given a student the passing mark only because of pressure from her co-teachers that she failed the student, that would have been the end of her diplomacy with her work mates. And yet, according to her, the student really did deserve a failing grade.

I do not know how much of our national preoccupancy is due to gossip. If I probably recall, the gossip is the favorite pastime of the majority of the national magnitude, the result would probably be in the deficit. In many be one of the major factors behind so much wasted time in Filipino culture. Just think how much your workplace about time wasted time by gossip.

Studies have shown that workplace gossip is really a form of workplace violence because it is "essentially a form of attack." Although many employee humiliation guard against it, very little is done to prevent it in normal people. A local study observed that gossip has penetrated even corporate e-mail, with often disastrous results especially when it is unintentionally forwarded to the wrong addressees.

In the workplace that I see, I can easily see more than over 10 percent of official communications is contaminated by gossip. Listening to the gossip distorts reality, paralyzes the creative exercise of the practitioners. The adhesions include even those with supposedly impenetrable academic degrees, including doctorates of course.

Gossip is the easy consistency of research. If gossip is the easy consistency of research, gossip only refers to mean verses that's information and gossip is as gospel truth. If there are two sides of a coin, the gossip "informant" only need to see one side to guess what lies on the reverse side. Without any chance or defense, the victim becomes totally tainted, and the gossiper, however, one is allowed to walking without one's head.

What do a gossiping people believe? The rules of civilized behavior usually place the gossiper in a lower rung. Scholars have asserted that gossip is actually an indicant of low self-esteem. Eleanor Roosevelt's great maxim that "great minds discuss ideas, average minds discuss events, small minds discuss people" must be an abomination to the small minds among us.

On the other hand, various religious perspectives have very low regard for gossip. Judaism, for instance, accuses it as sinful for it is destroying to three aspects of the human being: values is more graphic in its condemnation. It regards gossip as akin to eating the flesh of one's dead brother, as the philosophy that only the dead cannot defend themselves. Christianity regards gossip as being on the same league as murder and sexual immorality, and does indeed one worthy of death. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus does not authorize complaining to other church members as the road to resolution but to confront the offender first.

Aside from lost productivity and wasted time, there is so much besides to gossip that often overtakes such crimes that workplaces often resort to hostile work environment policies. Gossip only makes matters worse, cooperation. All those are particularly prompted by gossip. It causes deterioration in "mutual goodness." A gossiper is a form of environment and tolerance as necessary for the initial body to engage in it only to lose to that it can work more effectively on identity, it is not a joke. One when it kills the body, makes positive out of people, results in discouragement, hostile interactions and creates anxieties in the workplace where good employees have because of the unhealthy work atmosphere.

When the workplace witnesses the communication means of the grapevine, the official means should be used to stop it. The best way to kill a bush. Gossip is there a very strong indication of a rigorous breakdown. Woe to those with low self-esteem among us and who bring about the destruction not only of the workplace but also that of the nation known as the Philippines.

But for the sake of gossip, not in pleasant meadows with the thought that the best opinion of yourself is the one that God holds of you, and not the opinion that come from the trial of publicity wrought by gossip. There is such a thing as divine retribution.

* * *

Comments to rjfarolan@up.edu.ph

Chaos in Barangay Bansot

IT WAS A CLUTTERING ASSEMBLAGE. SECRETaries Hontiveros, Pulidó, Gloriada, Madrigal, Nolledo, three former colleagues, Bunge, together with retired Commodore Ocier and Governor Cuisquis, met with Mayor Mariano and our very own Representative Calabasa, were all seated around the conference table waiting for Speaker de Jar and congressman Carajal to arrive. Usec Hontiveros-Baraquel was also supposed to be there. Hence, At the high and mighty road to do before the snacks are served, they indulged in office gossip.

"You know," Pulidó said, in his wise way, "I just ran into Romulan in the hallway, I was coming downstairs and he ran into the from the rear."

"Anyway," Pulidó snapped, "Romulan tells me he has a new job. Do any of you know about it?"

Gloriada, glaring at Pulidó in particular, groaned, "Well, Thank, Sir. He is always coming up from the rear. I think he's outspoken."

"Anyway," Pulidó snapped, "Romulan tells me he has a new job. Do any of you know about it?"

Nolledo, glaring at Pulidó in particular, groaned, "Well, Thank, Sir. He is always coming up from the rear. I think he's outspoken."

"Anyway," Pulidó snapped, "Romulan tells me he has a new job. Do any of you know about it?"

Bunge, glaring at Pulidó in particular, groaned, "Well, Thank, Sir. He is always coming up from the rear. I think he's outspoken."

Result when proclaimed it all. Neri had been asked three explosive questions: (a) Whether the President followed up the ZTE project; (b) Whether the President directed him to pressure the ZTE; (c) Whether the President said to go ahead and approve the project after being told about the alleged bribe. Neri hid behind executive privilege, specifically under what is called "presidential communications privilege."

Under the late whatever claims "presidential communications privilege" must show good and

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THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

Abel Nolledo calmed down, but kept confused. "So those theory tells us nothing is really anyone's fault, because everything that is caused by themselves bearing their wings. The solution is to mainstream homosexuals and anyone not fond of heterosexuality?" Gen. Napoleon vigorously nodded agreement.

Madam took up the conversational thread. "So, so, when Minister gave Romulan that new job, did any of you notice the accompanying grants, benefits and privileges?"

Everyone confessed they'd missed that vital piece of government information.

"Well, if you had," Bunge asked, in his quiet but insightful manner, "you'd have known Romulan also got put in charge of ...what did Madam call it?" he asked Hontiveros, smiling.

Hontiveros chuckled. "She said, 'Not he, Benedict, I want you to make him everything, ha?'"

Bunge laughed. "Yes, and Romulan floated to his feet and agonized, 'Yes, Madame!' I will make sure your ambitions are fulfilled!'"

Aiden blushed. "He'll make us hops? He's crap, passed to be OK with his last medical making pad from three? What?"

Hontiveros sighed. "Not literally. You see, the reason he was put in charge of the whole shebang-up-something so we have a single point of response to the deteriorating PH situation."

"What deteriorating PH situation? Everyone knows but. And have no. How can it deteriorate further?" Nolledo couldn't help asking.

"He asked you to know, everybody's mind now," Pulidó grumbled.

"Mahal? So? Not for us. So what's the problem?" Nolledo inquired, adding, "How is it a PH problem?"

"Look. You print 10 million Barangay bong mahal? presents, and when its people write to them? 'Oh, mahal labas!' Then, my friend, is a PH problem," Hontiveros said.

"But the printers were so pretty," pouted Nolledo.

"Yes, and we all made a pretty penny!" Hontiveros continued, "but it's leading to bad jokes. So anyway Madame names Romulan should know such as he has connections and unfortunately visit Yemen Ajan, ha!" and he had to make it worse. Thank God it wasn't televised."

"You know, Romulan has no political sense," observed Mariano.

"Sometimes I wonder if Madame does, either," Calabasa muttered, causing everyone gasp in horror. "I mean," Calabasa continued, "If Romulan got the job, who did Madame then give him an additional job? There's already a secretary for doing on emergency answers to our numbers."

Bunge, ever the peacemaker, intervened. "I think Madame is very clever in that she realized how she could have such a single point of contact for the Romulan. Now, if we can only get him to do it more than usually. That way if we can understand how she runs it, no one can accuse us of being disloyal."

"Yeah, but Romulan?" Nolledo shook it. Logically secret services should be under whoever's in charge of that, but why put that person in charge, when you can create a new position and give it to someone else? If you give that new position to someone already being given a new position, then you have to be planning for another point?"

"I never thought of that," Calabasa admitted.

"That's why she's a madame and you're just a Jupiter," Hontiveros said, kindly. "Madame has given Romulan new jobs and we just have to support it. In the new regime everything, because we all know none of us are doing anything other than our own interest of our working for Madame..."

Everyone nodded, softly Speaker de Jar arrived.

"Ok, gentlemen," Hontiveros said, sincerely. "In business. The theme for this year's Issue of Barangay Bansot Address, it is 'Building on Success, Building our Landscape.' If you'll turn to Page 64 of the draft ..."

Street vendors' rights violated

THE OPERATIONS BEING CONducted by the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) against illegal vendors are reminiscent of the campaign brought by the hordes of Attila the Hun on their hapless victims. As shown on TV, MMDA operatives scattered the vendors' merchandise and their wares, despite their valuable books being sold on flarin. Assorted were confiscated by the authorities without the necessary inventory receipt.

The type of "law enforcement" should go back to school to learn more about said-and-seizure procedures. But if the authorities have no intention of preserving these illegal vendors in court, then an inventory receipt is no longer necessary and they are permitted to appropriate the loot for themselves.

I am calling the attention of the Commission on Human Rights to look into the plight of our street vendors.

—TERESA ESTEL
401 Kaya St., Concordia,
San Dionisio, Makati City

Eastern Samar doing its best to work on bad roads

LET HIS REACT TO THE LETTER to the editor (Inquirer, 7/9/08) regarding the bad condition of the national roads in Eastern Samar.

The provincial government has no jurisdiction over national roads. Its maintenance is the responsibility of the Department of Public Works and Highways. But since the condition of the national roads has become unbearable to motorists, I wrote the DPWH last March that the Guiguinto-Bulakan-Bocaue-Marilao-Meycauayan-Valenzuela road was the only road in the Central Luzon region that was not yet completed. I proposed to President Macapagal-Arroyo the inclusion of the Balite-Bulacan-Guiguinto-Guiguinto road in the priority list of infrastructure projects that should be funded. And President Arroyo readily granted my request. Hence, more than P400 million is now included in the 2008 General Appropriations Act for this purpose.

But while awaiting the release of the fund, the provincial government, funded by a combination of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan, Provincial Development Council, Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council and in close coordination with the mayors and barangay officials, has decided to mobilize its fleet of heavy equipment and manpower to help repair the badly damaged sections of the national highway. And the latter within call go back today to Llorente, Jewish had unsupervised the condition of the entire road there.

The road will be within our legal responsibility, but I think I have a moral obligation to protect the general welfare of my constituents. And I'm doing this to maximize our efforts to develop Eastern Samar, even as we have already included from the so-called "Club 20," the poorest of the poor provinces of the country.

—BENJAMIN EBUEN,
governor, Eastern Samar

LETTERS

Crusader award was undeserved

IT IS ASTOUNDING, IF NOT HEARTless, that the Publishers Association of the Philippines Inc. (Pupil) proclaimed GMA-owned Manager Thomas Gozon "Crusader of the Year." This was announced through an ADS published in the Inquirer last June 25. Pupil must have been misled in conferring the honor on him.

The award was endorsed to Gozon's fellow executives of Mediacom and his evaluation of the Lopezes can hardly be labeled a crusade. In reading a few spoofs like Lopezes, Gozon is not championing a cause but desperately trying to deflect criticism against him for his gross mismanagement of his GMA.

Gozon is having a string of woes of the Ombudsman for violation of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act - Corruption and extortion practices undisguised at the GMA under Gozon's leadership. He has summarily and illegally dismissed employees merely for obtaining his documents and policies. He fires the EDSA as if he and his family own the lines.

Gozon lacks the moral wherewithal to be a credible crusader. Pupil should instead confer awards on the former GMA employees who have become a long and valiant crusade to oust Gozon from the GMA for his incompetence and abuse.

—ALBERT R. VELASCO,
#16 A. Celestial St.,
Sampaloc, Manila

Robes: I was in my district all along

THIS SEEMS TO RANSOM JOLIbee's July 1 column titled "Will you still vote for them virtual?"

I consider it ironic he wanted the information that I was part of the official entourage in President Macapagal-Arroyo's recent travel to the United States. For the record, I would like to state that I was not part of the "official" visit, since the congressional travel last June, I have cut left my congressional district of the Ayta del Monte City Bataan.

I don't take issue with the merits of the President's recent trip to the supposed cost to the Filipino taxpayers. What I am humbly requesting Ms. Tubb is to state the distinction straight in his column, as soon as possible, in the interest of fairness and accurate reporting.

I want my constituents to know that their congressman was very much with his district during the period mentioned by Inquirer columnist Tubb, and was could have been economic setbacks that seem to every worsen their life conditions.

—REP. ARTHUR R. ROBES,
San Jose del Monte City, Bulacan

Suspect not employed by Waterfront

WE ARE WRITING TO RECTIFY an article which appeared on July 4, 2008, in the Metro section of the newspaper. Page 2 article, "Bomb suspect," entitled "Bomb suspect held for days." The item mentions that this suspect, a certain Michael Pastrana, is an employee of the Waterfront Manila Pavilion Hotel & Casino.

Please be informed that we have no employees by the said name, who/she is our kitchen or any other department within the company. Pastrana is an employee of Travelink Tourist Incorporated, which is an accredited travel agent by Pagcor Pavilion to operate their employee canteen, which is situated inside our hotel. While the company is contracted by Pagcor, Travelink has a separate management team and is therefore an independent of both the Waterfront Manila Pavilion and Pagcor.

We would highly appreciate it if you can issue a retraction to this article regarding the incorrect information that was published, to avoid the negative repercussions and confusion that may arise.

—GILLA P. FLORO,
Waterfront Inq.
communications manager,
Manila Pavilion Hotel

The information that Michael Pastrana was an employee of the Waterfront Manila Pavilion Hotel & Casino came from a police report on the instigator of the Manila Water Service bombing situation that also from the suspect himself during a one-on-one interview with the reporter.

—TINA C. SANTOS,
reporter, Inquirer

Rocxas' role in chicken price clarified

THIS IS IN REACTION TO BOIE, ester General's column titled "Wagging your imported chicken" (Inquirer, 6/26/08). Respectfully, we would like to clarify the portion where he stated that the increase in chicken prices is due to the 40-percent tariff on imported chicken allegedly imposed by Sec. Mar Roxas during his term as trade secretary.

First, under the Tariff and Customs Code of the Philippines, tariff duties are imposed on goods found on the HSTN (Harmonized System Tariff Nomenclature) and CETP (Common Effective Preferential Tariff) rates set under the World Trade Organization (WTO) and asean agreements, respectively. Meat products, under Sec. 22, Article II of the Uruguay Round, is in only the freedom of the Philippines who is authorized to reduce or increase the rates of import duties expressly fixed by law, upon investigation by the Tariff Commission and recommendation of the National Economic Council. The trade secretary is bound by law to impose the statutorily mandated tariff rates and import duties and has no authority to unilaterally increase or change the same.

Second, during the term of Senator Roxas as trade secretary, the importation tariff rate on chicken meat actually declined from a high of 40 percent in year 2000 to 40 percent in 2002. This was precisely under Executive Order No. 313, issued by President Macapagal-Arroyo on March 15, 2002. In addition, while EO 164 issued on Jan. 18, 2000 set tariff rates for chicken meat (HTSN 02.07) at 40 percent (bi-partite) and 60 percent (tri-partite), by the end of 2002 this was amended, through EO 264, to set a uniform rate of 40 percent for both tri-partite and out-quota. At present, the rate has been maintained at 40 percent (in-quota and out-quota) under EO 374 issued on May 4, 2006.

We do share Gerald's concern about the high prices of chicken and other food items in the market. The entire line has been studied, resulting in the recent suspension of the 1.2-percent DAP on oil amid soaring oil prices to enable Filipino consumers to have more money in their pockets. That is part of his legislative agenda now that the cheaper chicken line and tax exemption law have been enacted.

Given Gerald's esteemed role as a journalist and advocate of the rights and welfare of retired persons, we hope he can work together on legislation to help our country through these extremely difficult times.

—RAMON LEO G. VITERBO,
chief of staff,
Office of Sen. Mar Roxas

Thrilled by PDI, Abrera's cartoons

CONGRATULATIONS! MY WIFE and I have been avid readers of the Inquirer for the past 10 years. The paper is delivered right to our door by a nice young Muslim in Fortes, and we get the Saturday and Sunday issues in our house in Quezon City.

I find every news item complete, factual and factual. I also am thrilled by cartoonist Jess Abrera's Pinoy Kasi and Kwaku on Friday. I am 77 and my wife just turned 76 [illegible] and when he/she is not drinking or submitting to think in million readers! More power to you!

—ROBERTO LACSON,
PO Box 629, Manila

About that, our president, family photo-formalities, is working overtime. In the meantime, we thank you very much with lots of prayers for your continued health and may we continue to be your patron saint.
—Editor in Chief

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Sulpicio has own law of the sea

Front page A1

instead of putting the shipping company in the hot seat. Sulpicio Lines has also demonstrated it has imposed its own law of the sea with the dangerous overloads of demolishing government regulatory authority on maritime safety.

While the inquiries were underway taking the full glare of publicity, Sulpicio Lines mounted an aggressive campaign in the legal and legislative systems to shift the blame for the ferry disaster off Sibuyan Island.

The company's whole range of outputs included God Die producing scenes that took abject and the weather bureau and agencies responsible for stopping ships from heading recklessly head-on into typhoon paths (despite storm warnings).

The campaign was unleashed even through Sulpicio Lines had blocked on its vessels, with 860 passengers and crew still listed as missing, encumbered in the capsized ferry, and with its hold carrying a cargo of toxic pesticide that threatens to poison marine life.

The lopsided focus on the accountability of public authorities has left an outraged public asking: The smoking gun is inside the stricken ship, consisting of entombed human corpses, why are inquiries not holding Sulpicio Lines primarily accountable for the sea carnage despite the evidence of last human lives?

Probes to occulpate liner

Were the inquiries staged to exculpate Sulpicio Lines and to give the company a forum to look for scapegoats to demonstrate that government officials did not provide the shipowners, their captains, with information to allow their ship to steer clear of danger?

The hearings at the Board of Marine Inquiry (BMI) and the House committees on transport and oversight were framed for Sulpicio Lines and against the regulatory authorities in terms of giving them a forum to demonstrate public regulatory agencies.

Were the hearings held to whitewash Sulpicio Lines and give it a platform to mount a public relations offensive on a wide front to divert focus from its own accountability?

In the congressional hearing, many citizens have been prompted to ask on whose behalf and for whose benefit their representatives in the House were asking questions. The line of the victims apparently was the cause of least concern to members of Congress.

In the bureaucratic branch and legislative hearings, the queries were directed at highlighting procedural flaws on marine safety regulations for the traveling public. It seems that public hell has wheels in these hearings.

Public unprotected

In the hearings, the public appeared forlorn and unprotected while Sulpicio Lines seemed to have friends in strategic forums ready to lend a helping hand out of trouble and to shield it from pressure to remove the toxic cargo, to pay financial liabilities to the drowned victims, to retrieve the corpses and to allow the dead a decent burial.

In its aggressive legal offensive, Sulpicio Lines filed a number of suits. In one, the Manila Regional Trial Court rejected the company's petition for a temporary restraining order to stop the BMI inquiry. Sulpicio Lines claimed that the Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) had sole jurisdiction to inquire into maritime disasters and added that the BMI was "biased."

The company took advantage of the ambiguous overlap of jurisdictions of several government regulatory agencies overseeing the industry. However, the court gave the BMI the go-ahead to continue with its hearings.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez saw through the tactic of Sulpicio Lines to pressure the government with multiple suits.

He said the company was attempting to evade responsibility for the tragedy by filing, among other things, criminal charges against the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Service Administration (Pagasa) for allegedly failing to inform the ferry of the approaching typhoon, and Del Monte Philippines, allegedly for not declaring the toxic pesticide cargo.

'Squid tactics'

Both Pagasa and Del Monte have denounced these allegations. Gonzalez said suits by Sulpicio Lines were "squid tactics."

Pagasa has presented evidence that it issued periodic weather warnings tracking the typhoon's path. Tricksters showed that Sulpicio Lines disregarded these warnings and did not exercise prudence by allowing its ferry to sail into the typhoon's path, while other major shipping lines had their ships at port.

Sulpicio Lines has also filed a P3-million civil damage suit against Pagasa for allegedly giving "inaccurate" weather reports on Typhoon "Frank." It exercised flagrant "gross negligence and incompetence" in predicting the typhoon's path.

Despite the strong pressure of the shipping lobby in Cebu, Marina is not letting its color guarantining all vessels of Sulpicio Lines until the agency's complaints to audit weaknesses of the entire fleet. The issue here is between passenger and cargo safety and the consumer-oil interests of the company.

Next in hot seat

The House committees on transport and oversight remain slated hearings on Thursday on the ferry sinking, promising to put Sulpicio Lines in the hot seat. The draft of focus was prompted by criticism that the shipping company had a person of the fourth in-law's marriage.

Bacolod City Rep. Monico Puentevella, chair of the transport committee, admitted that the grilling last week was focused on the liability of government regulatory agencies, allowing Sulpicio Lines to escape scrutiny Thursday's hearing seeks to restore balance to the inquiry.

The committee counsel also puts the credibility of the committees on the line. Let's see if the committees could stop the lawyers of Sulpicio Lines from the 'war path of demolition of the government's regulatory authority over shipping lines that have drowned more than 4,000 passengers during the past 40 years.

RESIDENTS of Boie Cantanghan in Barangay Tacloc on Sibuyan Island view the sunken MV Princess of the Stars from the shore. [redacted]

Solons to probe all Sulpicio mishaps

Front page A1

In a text message last night, Sulpicio Lines spokesperson Victoria Peralta said:

"See all of the vessels in the [Lloyd's Maritime Information Service] list of incidents belong to Sulpicio Lines Inc. In the past 20 years, our vessels have logged over 30,000 voyages and the 45 reported incidents have to be taken in that context.

"Lloyd's compilation includes minor incidents such as those that occur while conducting underwater repair work on dry-docked ships or other vessels accidentally hitting our ships while anchored or pier."

Disregard of safety rules

Magsaysay described as "disturbing" the company's maritime safety record, saying it was an "undeniable proof of Sulpicio Lines' reckless disregard for sea safety."

He also blamed officials of the Department of Transportation and Communications, Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), and Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) for alleged negligence.

"This disturbing track record of Sulpicio only shows that the vessel operators and maritime regulators have grave regard for the safety of their ships and their passengers," Magsaysay said. "There can be no other explanation for that."

Bacolod Rep. Monico Puentevella, cochair of the joint congressional inquiry, had earlier said the final products of the hearing would be a bill creating a "super body" covering all maritime industry stakeholders.

Tighten franchise rules

He said he would present a blueprint for what could later be called "Transport Safety Board" during the resumption of the hearing on July 17.

Lagman said he would push for the tightening of procedures in the granting of franchise and certificates of public convenience to shipping lines.

"We have to make the process more stringent," he said. "So far, it's more difficult to secure a mayor's permit for a sari-sari store in the center than to get a certificate of public convenience."

Negros solon said investigating previous maritime incidents involving Sulpicio Lines would "help us discover the lapses of certain marine vessel operators and maritime officials in ensuring sea safety and the seaworthiness of every ship."

"We should also look at the sea disasters from the time our BOTC, Marina and shipping officials assumed their office so that we can see the pattern of competence of these personalities," he said. "They should be made to account for their negligence in the performance of their duties."

One watchdog agency

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pi. mentel yesterday said all shipping watchdog should merge into one body to ensure that unseaworthy vessels would not be allowed to sail.

Pimentel said "finger pointing" among the PCG, Marina and DOTC had become the norm every time a disaster struck the shipping industry, but no company had been penalized and no concrete reform had been put in place to ground deliberate fix-ing.

"The Senate should collapse so many offices with diverse functions on our shipping industry and saddle responsibility on just one office or an old bark-passing," Pimentel said in a text message to the Inquirer.

"You could use the same functions of its watch to eavesdrop by the proper government agencies should Sulpicio Lines go on with its business," Pimentel said.

Marina audit

In Cebu City, Marina Administrator Vicente Ibarra Jr. yesterday announced that his agency had begun a comprehensive audit of all passenger and cargo vessels operating in the country to determine if they were complying with safety standards.

He said the audit started last month in Batangas but had to be stopped to allow auditors to inspect the vessels owned by Sulpicio Lines after the Princess of the Stars sank off Sibuyan Island in Romblon during a typhoon last month.

Ibarra said Marina auditors were investigating Sulpicio Lines following complaints of deficiencies against the small international shipping company based in Cebu.

He explained that the audit was not to find fault but to establish lapses so they can be corrected. The audit will be done in phases since it takes time to inspect ships to audit one vessel, he said. If deficiencies are found, the vessels will be grounded. With a report from Jhunnex Napallacan, Inquirer Visayas

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A 19-PIECE orchestra accompanies world-acclaimed singer Lea Salonga, the first Filipino performer to have a solo concert at the architecturally iconic Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles.

Standing ovation for Lea in historic concert

From page A1

ter of the Philippines on July 29, Salonga delivered a spirited performance of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "There's Music in You."

Another milestone

The performer reciprocated the audience's standing ovation at the end of her set with encore numbers, "Tomorrow" and "Someone's Waiting For You."

The concert also marked another milestone.

It was the first show in a series of concerts titled "Global Pop at the Music Center" which features popular performers from around the world.

The series was launched by The Blue Ribbon Foundation of the Music Center, of which the Walt Disney Concert Hall is a part, as a way of tapping the artists that represent the diverse communities of Los Angeles.

The Blue Ribbon Foundation president spoke before the concert began, saying that the celebrated pianist was thrilled to present the "incredibly talented" Salonga as the first performer in its Global Pop series.

The Friday night show attracted a diverse audience to the concert hall for the first time. Many Filipinos said that it was their first time to be in the Music Center complex.

Memories of Carnegie Hall

They trooped there various parts of vouchers California to watch the only Filipino artist who made a classy sweep of the Olivier, Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics and Theatre World awards perform in a sensational setting acclaimed for its superb acoustics.

The show echoed Salonga's debut at New York's famed Carnegie Hall in 2005. Filipino community leaders, including José Jaclero and Winston Tinsiano, helped organize the historic concert.

Since it opened in 2003 as the new home of the LA Philharmonic Orchestra, the Walt Disney Concert Hall has drawn visitors from different countries who are eager to see Gehry's gleaming architectural gem. Visitors flock to the unique, shimmering structure every day and take pictures of the building from different angles.

Mount Hollywood stories such as "Iron Man" and "Get Smart" also featured the concert hall in important scenes.

At the after-concert reception at The Edison, a posh club in downtown Los Angeles, Salonga received congratulations from the guests.

GOD BLESS the PHILIPPINES

A DECLARATION on Fil-American Friendship Day - Revealed in Philippine Money

BY GRACE GALINDEZ-GUPANA

One stormy day in 2006 amidst turmoil, economic crisis, disaster, famine and political unrest, I was suddenly caught in a quagmire. Feature of my life swiftly came into view and at a moment, I asked to ask myself: "Where am I going? Where is my assurance headed to? Where will my family, my country, my church and community go?" Answers to the questions remain wrapped in the dark, unanswered and in the middle of confusion, I was betrayed.

"Lord, Jesus Christ, the Savior of mankind, Redeemer of Your kind. You shed Your blood to save me from all my sins. I acknowledge that I am a sinner and I have failed You. I repent of all my sins and ask that You forgive me for not loving You, following other gods and idols. Forgive me for not loving my country and my countrymen. Forgive me for not supporting, honoring and praying for the people and leaders. You have placed in authority to lead and rule this blessed land. **Open my eyes to see Your will for my life.** Allow my spiritual eyes to hear Your voice and call. Soften my heart to have compassion and freedom to help the wretched, the unbelievers, the poor and the oppressed. Filipino brothers. Help me to love, honor and serve my country. You have called me by my name, as Your child, and as part of the Filipino nation. Bring me into Your light, take full control of my life, my family, my business, and all my endeavors. Rule and reign in our country. In Jesus' name. Amen."

After this brief dialogue with the Lord, He sent me the Holy Spirit and revealed to me a timely revelation – a revelation on the Philippine banknotes. Money is a legal tender in all countries. Money in some is the by all and not all of economics, is or otherwise equated to power, stability and trust. But the revelation states that there is more beyond the physical appearance and value of our money.

James Ballie, an American missionary, dropped by our office one day and gave me a sermon about the US Dollar Bills. According to him, there is power in the declaration printed in the bills. He said that the economic foundation of a country is printed in their banknotes, the legal tender or instrument accepted and passed on from people to people, nation to nation. Mr. Bailey further explained that the twin towers attack on September 11, 2001 has been declared in the 5, 10, 20 and 50 American dollar bills. (See pictures below.)

US Twin Towers - 911

Philippine 100-Peso Unveiled

The Banner of God is raised

Year 2008 - Time for Redemption

The front side of the 2006 peso banknote features Manuel Roxas, the first president of the independent Philippine Republic. He was the President who ruled for Israel to be a state in 1948.

Independence is shown at the right side where the Philippine flag was raised while that of the United States was lowered on July 4, 1946 indicating the end of the Commonwealth period and the beginning of the Third Republic of the Philippines.

Below the flag is a crowd of people, who witnessed the lowering of the US flag.

It was further revealed to me that the genius of President Roxas in setting the Israel's statehood deserves a reward as pronounced in Genesis 12:3 **"I will bless those who bless you and I will curse those who curse you".** "You" here denotes Israel, the promise land, the land of the Lord. This year after the celebration of Fil-Am Friendship Day, is the time to reap the reward, and the Filipino people has the only authority to do so because of what we did to Israel. Adding to President Roxas' gesture is the fact that Filipinos, represented by Hallelujah Prophetic Global PG Foundations and ABS-CBN Hardin International Corporation, made the largest Israel flag unfurled in five strategic areas in Israel namely Masada Arsenal, Hat, Latrun near Jerusalem, Golan Heights and Gaza Strip Boundary **encoring me are speaking for Israel the chosen people of God.**

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Faith in our people and Faith in God

The front side of the 500-peso banknote features the portrait of Benigno Aquino, Jr. To the right of the banknote, there are two symbolic quotes: **"Faith in our people and faith in God", and "The Filipino is worth dying for"**, declared by Ninoy Aquino. There is also a dove of peace and a Philippine flag which represents the Shekinah of God, Red, White and Blue with 3 Stars stand for God the Father, the Son, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Sun Stone represents ARISE, SHINE for your light has come and the glory of the Lord is upon you. Isaiah 60:1

Philippines Seven Declared Destiny to Claim

The revelation clearly gave seven declared destiny which Filipinos need to claim as rewards for what has been done during the historic naming of the Philippine flag more than 100 years ago. In the Bible, naming of flags or banners symbolizes God's victory, authority, reign and ownership. **I believe that what happened on July 4, 2008 when we unfurled the largest Philippine flag at the UST Compound, Metro Manila was a powerful declaration of not only of our love for our country but more significantly of what God wants to fulfill for our people under His rulership.**

1. Filipinos' spiritual salvation, revival and transformation, meaning we will go back to the original Jewish roots of our Faith through Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and will return to God, our Creator, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Israel.
2. Peace and unity among our people in obedience to the Moral Standard of God, the Ten Commandments given to Moses that will surely lead to prosperity of nations in the land.
3. Government of God to rule and reign for God is Love in the Philippines and the world.
4. Supernatural manifestation of the Holy Spirit, healing of people spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically and materially to people and the land.
5. Extension of territory where Filipinos will be promoted globally as Ambassadors of God, for the Kingdom of God to rule and reign forever.
6. Good Shine. For your light has come. Wealth and abundance for Filipinos in fulfillment of the Philippines as Pearl of the Orient Seas, Luzong Hiniyang, Hiyang Maguilo (chosen land beloved country) to be outstanding in all nations of the world.
7. Health, wisdom, discernment and understanding of the Filipino people as we will continue to carry our mission to expand the Kingdom of God.

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Across the NATION

Capiz dads to probe 'greedy' traders

By Felipo V. Cañez
and Nestor Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ROXAS CITY—THE PROVincial board of Capiz will investigate the alleged involvement of some Capiz businessmen who took advantage of the calamity that hit their neighbor Aklan, particularly the capital town Kalibo, by selling basic goods in the devastated province at exorbitant prices.

Board member Emilton Steve Gonzales said he was saddened by reports that Capiznon businessmen, instead of helping Aklan, took advantage of Aklan's misery.

Kalibo was hardest hit by Typhoon "Frank," second in Bulk City Basic services remained down and commodities are scarce, forcing Aklanons to wait for relief goods or to turn to Roxas City to shop for goods.

Gonzales said reports of greedy Capiznon traders was lamentable because it overshadowed the kindliness of the people of Capiz to help their brothers in Aklan.

Gonzales, as president of the Rotary Club of Roxas Bayan, has led the distribution of relief goods and portable water in Kalibo.

Thousands of victims of Typhoon "Frank" in Aklan need food and other relief goods for at least a month.

THOUSANDS of Aklan residents wait to be given food packs during a recent visit of President Macapagal-Arroyo at the Kalibo airport.

More than 500,000 people were affected by the typhoon that battered Panay Island and submerged Kalibo and neighboring areas under knee-deep mud and other debris.

While most streets have been cleared of mud, uprooted trees and fallen electric posts, offices and commercial establishments still need repairs.

Aklan, especially Kalibo, was cut off from access and communication for several days at the height of the typhoon.

At least 53 persons died and 398 were injured in the province. At least seven others are missing, according to a report of the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council.

Kalibo Mayor Reynaldo Quimbo said in a telephone interview that three of his sons were still focused on providing assistance to residents who were out of three of the town's population of 71,000 affected by the flooding.

Electricity has been restored in only less than half of the town, Quimbo said.

Residents are also dependent on two water pumping stations at Binagsayan Park for their potable water because water provided by the town's water system was not safe for drinking.

The mayor said classes in elementary schools in the town proper were expected to resume only today because the needless cleared classrooms and destroyed school equipment. Office in the municipal government were also expected to resume today.

But assessment teller members of banks were still down after suffering major damages.

Marquez said they are drafting the rehabilitation plan for the province, which could require a huge amount of funding. Damage to property, agriculture and infrastructure in the province is estimated to reach P15 billion, according to Marquez.

"But we will overcome. Adversities are to subdue," he said.

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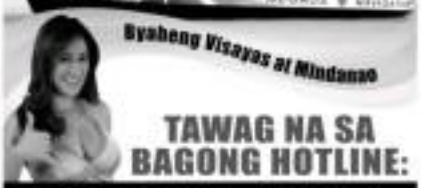

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Floods recede in Cotabato City

Steel bridge brings tears to Esperon's eyes

COTABATO CITY—FLOODWATER has almost subsided with only one main street and few interior streets here still with a few inches of water on Tuesday.

Dida Tecao Maitara, former mayor of Sabun Barangay town in the opposite riverbank of nearby Shariff Kabunsuan, said the Rio Grande de Mindanao River's current has now had entire space for downstream flow.

But residents feared for yet more bouts of flooding as heavy rains pounding from upstream Datu Piang town in Maguindanao, which had damaged a maintenance bridge and destroyed two tributary bridges.

The embankments of the Presidential Bridges I and II in Barangay Ubandang Malayang, North Cotabato crashed early Saturday due to shifting huge mass of soil-caused wild grass and water lilies, a resident, Jordan Tawasa, said.

Seven villages in Midsayap were affected as floodwaters submerged the Midsayap-Pikit road, an old highway connecting the province to the American colonial period to quell Moro resistance, he said.

The affected villages are Barangays Glandang, Kialdangguia, Midtimbang, Kadiguean, Dunguhan 1 and 11, schools are either totally or partly under water.

Also affected were at least 15 other barangays in Datu Piang, Mamasapano, Rajah Buayan, Datan Sa Bayanan and Datu Saudi Up Ampatuan, all in Maguindanao.

Abdulaziz Abdulgani, village chair of Glandang, said the erosion had left impassable the old Midsayap Road linking neighboring towns, severely affecting trading activities.

Mansoon said the seven-lane sediment lane could be kept afloat by the water current's pressure underneath.

Bukidnon Treg Abracchi said the city's boundaries water level on streets and interior villages had gone down by over half a foot.

Datus, Mastan's older brother, Michael, a Moro scholar, said Sultanate's indigenous method of curing the clay by its seemingly fresh flat-cracks would allow water pressure underneath to resurface and eventually break the larger pastes into smaller parts.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front said it was sending about a hundred fighters to help remove thick water lilies along the river.

"We will be there not to fight government soldiers but to work side by side with them in clearing water lilies off the river," Eid Kabalu, MILF civil-military affairs chief, told the Inquirer by phone.

For two weeks now, soldiers have been working with volunteers to remove the water hyacinth from the river.

"Our troops will be armed with bamboo poles, shovels and rakes," Kabalu said.

The MILF fighters will help clear the river near Cotabato City and upstream, especially in Datu Piang in Maguindanao where a huge volume of water lilies are on its way to Cotabato City, he said.

The Datu Piang bridge has been downstream with thick water lilies and local officials fear it might collapse.

The bridge connects Datu Piang and Midsayap, North Cotabato. Two bridges before the Datu Piang bridge have already been destroyed by flash floods spawned by Typhoon "Frank."

Col. Julieto Arolo, 6th Infantry Division spokesperson, said every day 150 soldiers have been working to clear the river channels with water lilies.

Engr. Saijh Dilangalen of Cotabato engineering district, said the 21-day flooding in Cotabato City and Sultan Kudarat town in Shariff Kabunsuan was caused by the natural re-channeling of faraway rivers in Shariff Kabunsuan.

He said that when the heavily silted Simuay diverted its course toward the Rio Grande de Mindanao River, a boroughs tour of line used that silted the river near Cotabato City.

Atty. Teng Ambolodto, an environmentalist, warned of more flooding unless the rivers and tributaries in the Liguasan marshland are dredged. Sarah E. Mandawa and Edwin D. Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao

COTABATO City employees, soldiers and ordinary folk join hands in clearing Rio Grande de Mindanao of water lilies that slowed the river flow and flooded low lying areas of the city

LAMITAN CITY, BASILAN—THE 52-meter wooden bridge is no longer there and in its place, a concrete steel steel structure now spans the clear water below.

But the memory of the wooden bridge brought former armed forces chief Gen. Hermogenes Esperon tears.

"I think the second time I cried, the first was in December 2002, a lot of things changed but the memories remain," Esperon told reporters here.

He said as a young lieutenant, he was leading a group of soldiers across the old Cauayan Bridge in Barangay Baluno here when they encountered rebels.

"This bridge was dilapidated before. We used to cross the river to reach other villages and this is the site where I lost my first three men when I was still a young lieutenant," a teary-eyed Esperon told reporters during a visit here on Thursday.

The bridge, he recalled, was also a silent witness to his first mass burnings ranking number in Baluno, where about 30 children, women and men fell victims.

Fifteen of the men burnings were later beheaded, he said.

Esperon said noble hierarchical memories, the sight of a concrete bridge in place of the dilapidated one also overwhelmed him.

The Esperon saw him successfully reaching the cold steel bridge while talking to reporters.

US Ambassador Kristie Kenney rushed to Esperon relived his memories as a young soldier in Basilan.

'We used to cross the river to reach other villages and this is the site where I lost my first three men when I was still a young lieutenant'

There is an apparent effort to lighten the atmosphere, Kenney called on all those present to pause for a photo opportunity.

"It's wonderful to see Basilan prospering, developing, it's been exciting for me to be here to see the Basilan people very energetic," Kenney said after the ribbon cutting rites for the bridge, now known as the Bailey-Cauayan Bridge.

The replacement bridge for the wooden structure that Esperon was talking about had cost P20 million, according to Gerbe Tan, deputy chief of party and infrastructure team leader for the Growth With Equity in Mindanao (GEM) program.

GEM, he said, had partnered with the Regional Impact Project of the Government Region in Muslim Mindanao government, the local government of Basilan and Lamitan and the United States Agency for International Development to realize the project.

"The bridge has reduced average transport time, increased safety of all vehicles traveling on the barangay road and contributed to the safe and timely transportation of commercial agricultural products to and from the neighboring barangays to market centers," Tan said.

Esperon agreed.

"During our time, beyond the river were several poor communities. Now beyond the bridge are plantations of rubber and other agricultural products, isn't it inspiring?" he said. Julie T. Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao

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Quarry workers seek Panlilio aide's ouster

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—SOME 100 employees assigned to the quarry special committee of the Pampanga government entered their 63rd day of protest here on Saturday, refusing to leave the picket line until Gov. Eddie Panlilio heeded their demand to remove provincial administrator Ulyses Dalisay.

They launched the picket at the capitol's Aurelio Park on Thursday in sympathy for the eight supervisors dismissed as quarry checkers by Dalisay for alleged irregularities. Two weeks ago, Dalisay terminated four checkers for the same reasons.

Their leader, Edward de Leon, said the protest was "mainly sparked by the rude treatment" by Dalisay.

Edsel Flores, one of those dismissed, recalled that on Monday at 1:30 p.m., Dalisay called at least 21 quarry personnel to the office of the Bulan Diocesan Lubaquens at Lilimpatan) conference.

Dalisay asked as supervisors to hand over our handheld radio transceivers. Then she asked us to give the car keys. She then said: 'Starting now, you are not assistant supervisor because anyway supervisors make the same salary as the checkers. Those who agree with this, you follow me to my office,' the left. When she returned she found no supervisor. She said, 'Those so-called supervisors, you may now leave,'" Flores recalled.

Reached by phone, Dalisay said Arroyo's account was "not accurate."

"In that meeting, I politely asked them to turn over the radios and the car keys. I particularly told them because we were going to identify the team leaders and organize the monitoring teams per shift in each of the 10 towns from end of the checkers. I told them that it was unsupervised now if your name is supervisor as checker since everyone has a salary Grade of 11 (P5,500)," she said.

"I told them if you don't want the responsibility, you're free to go. I won't hold that against you. Since then they were not grouping themselves . . . I left the room in the meantime as they could talk and group themselves. When I returned, they had not done their work. I asked the supervisors to leave the room," she said.

De Leon said he was absent in the meeting but he trusted the account of Flores and the others.

Dalisay said she was not seen with them and cancelled jokes in between.

Except saying that several incidents of illegal quarry operations "were unabetted" in the City of San Fernando, Floridablanca and Lubao, Dalisay declined to disclose further details on the extent of the liability of some supervisors.

De Leon complained that Dalisay did not involve the grievance committee of the Bulan in the investigation.

Dalisay, a lawyer, said a number of information obtained during her investigation were "first hand."

Panlilio said he approved the termination and demotion to ensure that the regulatory system was protected from any malfunction or irregularity. Quarry collections reached ₱150 million as of June 30.

Negotiations with Dr. Leon's group had started on Friday, he said.

The picket line has paralyzed the monitoring activities. The collection of the 19.5% small tax and ₱150 administrative fee on excess truckload of sand continues to be made by the provincial treasurer's office.

Panlilio said the competition to do wrong has remained because the 187 quarry employees continue to get ₱5,500 monthly.

He asked the provincial board to restore their salaries to Grade 5 (₱7,800) and Grade 7 (₱9,800), for a total of ₱320.3 million including overtime pay.

The board has yet to approve three items, which were included in the province's P749 million supplemental budget, he said. *Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon*

COAST Guard members conduct water sampling near where the MV Princess of the Stars capsized last month. The vessel carried, among others, tons of the toxic pesticide, endosulfan. VINA SALVOSA/INQUIRER SOUTHERN LUZON

Sibuyan fishers sail despite ban

SAN FERNANDO, SIBUYAN ISland—Despite the ban on the harvest and sale of fish in Sibuyan waters, fishermen here refused to stay ashore and catch fish even for their own consumption.

Fishermen Jose Bollos said Tuesday he saw some fishermen on board two boats last Monday night to catch fish.

He did not join the group because he had his fishing boat when "[photo="Frank"] struck.

The ban would not prevent fishermen, Bollos said, because it is their only means of livelihood.

"Could you stop them when they have nothing to eat," he added.

The boats usually arrive at dawn with fish as big as the "talakitok" and the giant squid, he showed.

A fisherman who denied violating the ban said the fishermen caught about 70 kilos of fish the night before and distributed them to their neighborhood.

Some of the fish were sold at ₱50 per kilo from the previous ₱100 if there were people wanting to buy.

A kilo of the giant squid, he said, is now ₱110 or almost half of its previous price of ₱200.

"You wait for them tomorrow morning at the shore, you will see many fish," Bollos quipped.

San Fernando Mayor Nanette Incatrogo said they would strictly enforce the ban on fishing as there were reports of a fishkill in the village of Cangalicu.

She said the fishkill was only reported on Tuesday but it happened on Saturday as it was hard to verify.

"We send our police in the site but couldn't night patrols and make public announcements that the fishing ban had not yet been lifted.

Last Monday, an official of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources said that their water sampling on July 2 was negative of toxic chemicals. *Rikki Carlo/Inquirer College, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

Militant fishermen's group asks commercial fishers to join strike

ILOILO CITY—THE PAMBANSANG LAKAS ng Bilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pambansa), a nationwide alliance of militant fishermen, has appealed to operators of commercial fishing vessels to join their planned strike in the last week of August against what they said were the unstoppable increases in the prices of petroleum products.

The Pambansa claimed that the country's backward fishing industry was suffering further from monthly hikes in the prices of gasoline and other petroleum products.

"We have to come up with a very strong position against this across the commodity organization of the oil sector and the national government in the name of national interest and people's honor for self-fish sufficiency and fish security," Pambansa's national chair Fernando Hicap said in a statement Saturday, a copy of which was sent to Inquirer.

Hicap said their group, composed of 60,000 small fishermen members in 43 provinces nationwide, and commercial fishing operators have a common cause to fight and stop the endless hikes in the prices of petroleum products.

However, commercial fishing operators in Quezon have expressed reservations over their plan.

"We will seriously study the matter," said a commercial fisher, who requested anonymity.

Hicap said he understood why the association of commercial fishing operators have yet to issue a statement against the investment measures at the prices of petroleum products.

"Because they are afraid Malacañang would extend their permits and bar their fishing vessels if they join the protest. But like the small fishermen, they are also groaning in pain because of high prices of oil," he said.

Since the start of the year, petroleum products have risen 18 times for a total of ₱9.8 a liter for gasoline and ₱19.50 a liter for diesel and kerosene.

The recent price adjustment brought prices of premium unleaded gasoline to between ₱55.75 and ₱61.98 a liter and diesel, ₱52 and ₱54.05, inclusive of the 12 percent value added tax.

With world oil prices shooting up to record levels of more than $140 a barrel, local oil companies have announced that more price hikes will continue until August at the least.

Citing their own study, Pambansa said fishermen-owners of 177,607 motorized small fishing boats across the nation who each employs two to three small fishermen could no longer bear the brunt of rising prices of petroleum products.

The study also said the unstoppable hikes in the prices of petroleum products mean now, no small boat owners either to reduce hours of fishing from an average of eight to 12 hours to four to eight hours, or abandon their 4 to 15 horsepower motors and look for other jobs such as bicycle driving, construction work in and out of the fishing villages and sometimes work.

Small fishermen use at least 5 liters to 10 liters of regular gasoline, costing between ₱500 to ₱600 to fuel their pumpboats fishing ground. Their catch of 5 to 10 kilos or 350 per kilo or about ₱2250 to ₱3500 a day," he said. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon*

DENR affirms decision to allow geothermal drilling at Kanlaon

By Carlo F Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD CITY—ENVIRONMENT SECRETARY Lito Atienza stands by his department's decision to allow the Energy Development Corp. to drill geothermal energy at the buffer zone of Mt. Kanlaon amid a class suit filed against him on Friday by the Save Mt. Kanlaon Coalition.

"We have to do our duty in the interest of the greater majority," Atienza said.

The class suit, filed at the regional trial court here on Thursday that also named the EDC and the Protected Area Management Board of the Mt. Kanlaon Natural Park as respondents, seeks to stop EDC from drilling geothermal energy from the park's buffer zone.

Atienza earlier granted EDC a low-risking permit within the buffer zone, which the complainants have asked the court to void.

EDC has sought entry into the buffer zone to tap more geothermal energy for its Southern Negros Geothermal Production Field in Mailum, Ilogo, to meet a power shortage in Negros Occidental, as residents manager Gino de la Cruz said earlier.

Atienza told the Inquirer that he welcomed the complainants' filing advocacy for the environment.

However, it is the responsibility of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Department of Energy to give provide the people of Negros access to adequate low-priced electricity, he said.

"We are standing on firm legal ground in allowing EDC entry into the buffer zone," he said. "The class suit will allow us the opportunity to explain our position very accurately."

He said the DENR, in granting the EDC a low-risking permit, set strict provisions for the protection of the environment in the buffer zone.

They were not given license to wantonly destroy the forest, he said.

"We are one with the complainants in wanting to protect the environment," he stressed.

The request of EDC for a Special Tree Cutting Permit had been reviewed carefully by the DENR, particularly its Forest Management Bureau and the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau, he said.

NPA rebels raid agricultural firm in Davao City

Dengue fever cases up 75% in Eastern Visayas

By Joey A. Gabieta
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—DENGUE fever cases in Eastern Visayas rose by 75 percent in the first half compared to the same period last year, the Department of Health reported.

DOH regional sentinel center Regional Center said the incidence from January to June stood at 1,981, the same number of fatalities recorded in the region for the whole year of 2007.

Cerero said the region's dengue fever cases for the first half reached 2008, a 75 percent increase from last year's 179 cases for the same period in 2007.

Of the 256 people afflicted with dengue fever, around 66 percent were children not older than 14 years old.

Cerero said the two most recent fatalities, both minors and from Barangay Buenavista in Tacloban, an island town in Samar province, died in the first and second week of June.

The dengue fever that hit Buenavista, which has 514 residents, started in May and continued until the last week of June.

Cerero said his office had conducted defogging operations in the village on Friday on top of launching an information campaign.

He said the residents were urged to observe cleanliness and destroy possible breeding places of dengue-carrying mosquitoes.

TINALAK FESTIVAL
Street dancers perform during the opening on Saturday of the 9th Search Celebrate T'nalak Festival in Koronadal City. (CRYSTEL MATHEUS/INQUIRER MINDANAO)

Wear masks vs dust storms, Iloilo folk advised

By David Israel Sinay
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—THE DEPARTMENT OF Health in Western Visayas has advised the ailing public and drivers to wear surgical masks to protect themselves from pulmonary illness caused by dusts that now envelope typhoon-ravaged areas in the region.

Philis the drying of the mud and muddy water that inundated this city and many other areas on Panay Island at the height of Typhoon "Frank" on June 21, "the problem now is the dust," said DOH regional director Lydia Deja-Ramos.

Ramos warned commuters and residents of the "dust storms" which may aggravate pulmonary diseases such as asthma, cough, and other lung problems.

Ramos recommended to the local government units, particularly in this city and in Aklan, to provide their constituents with surgical masks "or even improvised masks ... for protection from dirt."

Dried mud becomes powdery and swiftly goes airborne that could be easily inhaled, Ramos said.

She said residents could immediately seek medical attention at available health facilities if they get sick.

"Health centers were adequately provided with medicines ... for free," she said.

The DOH has reported that typhoid fever and leptospirosis were the predominant illnesses monitored by the regional epidemiology center in clean water became scarce after the typhoon destroyed several water systems in the region.

Dr. Elena Abenoja, DOH regional epidemiologist, said the shortage of potable water is a continuing problem. The DOH anticipates an outbreak of water-borne diseases in the next two months, he said.

"We are conducting continuous disease surveillance," he said.

Based on DOH statistics from June 29 to July 10, Abenoja said there were already 65 suspected cases of leptospirosis in the region with seven deaths reported in Aklan and Iloilo.

Abenoja said hospital admissions in the cases of typhoid fever reached 132.

He said he immediately told local officials to avoid making use of water resources in the area for drinking. "It's either they put chlorine or boil the water first before drinking," he said.

DAVAO CITY—SUSPECTED NEW PEOPLE'S Army (NPA) rebels set agricultural firm here on Saturday night, burning heavy equipment and taking the firearms of a security guard.

Maj. Armand Rico, spokesperson of the Eastern Mindanao Command based in Camp Waterfall here, said the rebels forcibly entered the compound of Canopa Fibres Corp. in Binaugay Lasang at around 7 p.m., disarmed the guard, and set on fire a crane valued at P500,000.

The Sun, owned by a certain Sulaco Chua, manufactures ground abaca and buri fibers. Fertilizers which are distributed nationwide, Rico said.

Police are eyeing extortion as motive for the attack. Rico said Chua had received an extortion letter from the rebel group last year.

The NPA recently stepped up its attacks in Sarangani del Norte, Compostela Valley, Davao Oriental, Agusan del Sur and Davao del Sur, targeting police stations and firms.

In Agusan del Sur, around 80 "lumad" families in a remote village of Bunawin were fled their homes when fighting between government troops and NPA rebels erupted on Friday afternoon.

Maj. Michelle Aguaviva, spokesperson of the 4th Infantry Division based in Cagayan de Oro City, said four rebels were killed while two others were wounded in the encounter with the Army's 42nd Division Reconnaissance Company in Sitio Lemunsyo in Barangay La Fortuna.

Aguaviva said a soldier, Pfc. Reynaldo Garcia, was hit in the right cheek.

Ferdinand Pena, provincial information officer, said the villagers started fleeing into Friday night to avoid being caught in the crossfire while Army soldiers pursued the rebels.

Mayor Jolimar Mandejas gave the people temporary shelter at the ta Sorraya Elementary School.

Chief Supt. Aaron Aquino Mills, director of the Caraga regional police, earlier ordered a full alert status to all municipal police stations in the region after the NPA Pulang Diwata Command raided two of their stations in Surigao (shot on June 25.

The military said at least 12 rebels were killed, but Maoki Malaya, Pulang Diwata spokesperson, said no one of their combatants was wounded. Dennis Jay Santos and Chris V. Panganiban, Inquirer Mindanao

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DA revises guidelines for fertilizer subsidy

A FARMER in Candon City, Ilocos Sur, transplants his rice seedlings even without rain. Farmers in the province are using motorized pumps to irrigate their crops.

MANILA, CITY—THE DEPARTMENT OF Agriculture has revised its guidelines in the distribution of fertilizer subsidies amid fears of farmers of a recurrence of an alleged fund diversion that involved then Agriculture Undersecretary Jocelyn Bolante.

Defen Jerry Baltazar, DA assistant regional director, said the farmers criticized the agency when they were told that another fertilizer subsidy program would be offered to them.

"They said, 'Baka dadan Jocjoc Bolante lang yan (That would be another case of fund diversion like the one that involved Jocjoc Bolante),' when they were told that a subsidy was in place. After Jocjoc, we had to change the mechanism of distribution," Baltazar said.

Bolante was accused of diverting P728 million allocated by the government to buy fertilizers for farmers to purportedly finance the election campaign of President Macapagal-Arroyo in 2004.

Baltazar said that under the new distribution scheme, the DA would monitor the direct beneficiaries through a counterchecker by the agency per region.

He said the DA had asked municipal agriculturists to prepare the list, which would later be submitted to the provincial agriculturist, who would then check the authenticity of the list.

This mechanism is different from the previous program wherein congressmen of representatives and local political leaders took charge in disbursing the budget, he said.

"They were the ones who knew where the funds went," Baltazar said.

The government has earmarked P37.8 million to cover the subsidy this year. An initial P16 million had been released by the government for distribution to farmers, in time for the rice planting season that will last until October.

The DA will subsidize two bags of fertilizers through coupons equivalent to P250 each. The remaining four bags will be subsidized by local governments through their internal revenue allotment share as their counterpart to the subsidy program.

Six bags of fertilizers are needed for a hectare of rice farm.

Baltazar said the regional DA was set to distribute coupons to farmers in Kalinga, Apayao and Abra.

Wilfredo Marbella, deputy secretary general of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), said his group would monitor the implementation of the government's fertilizer program to guard against fund misuse.

Marbella, in a telephone interview on Thursday, said the KMP and its allied organizations were also monitoring how the government's P5.1 billion irrigation fund, which was released last year, was used.

"We are worried that nothing is happening with the P5.1 billion irrigation fund. This could be another Jocjoc Bolante scam. Farmers who have been monitoring the funds said irrigation projects are not being fully implemented," he said. *Desiree Cabanz, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

NEWSBRIEFS

■ CAMP VICENTE LIM, LAGUNA

18 firearms seized

THE CALABARZON Police Office confiscated 18 illegal firearms and ammunitions in June.

Chief Supt. Ricardo Padilla, regional police director, said commanders of the Regional Special Operations Group and the Regional Mobile Group submitted the firearms to the Regional Crime Laboratory Office to determine if these were used in recently committed crimes.

Under "Operation Baksi," people are reminded not to carry their firearms in public places to avoid apprehension, Padilla said. *Rosario O. Pante, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

■ OCCIDENTAL MINDORO

NPA rebel killed

A NEW People's Army member was killed in an encounter with police and Army troops, a military report said.

Capt. Lino Santiago, spokesperson of the Army's Southern Luzon Command, identified the slain rebel as Ronnie Ferrer, alias Ah-Ing/Jack of Barangay Malpuetan, Calintaan town, and an alleged medical officer of the Platoon Guerrilla, 1st Command of the NPA.

Santiago said the encounter took place at about 8 a.m. on July 8 at the vicinity of Hacienda Ala Barangay Agapa. Pinet Air Army official said soldiers recovered Ferrer's body at noon the next day near the Agapa High School. *Rosario O. Pante, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

■ BACOLOD CITY

Suspected rebel slain

A SUSPECTED New People's Army rebel was killed while an Army soldier was wounded in encounters in Barangay Ynigpit, Ilog, Negros Occidental, on Friday.

The skirmishes were between 40 NPA rebels reportedly led by Ronald Cation, alias Kumpol, and soldiers of the 94 Infantry Battalion, according to Lt. Joselito Clutario, deputy chief of the Civil Military Operations of the 61st IB.

Batista said the slain rebel was identified by the Ilog police as Boltie Magallones of Barangay Cleopatras, Ilog, and the slightly wounded soldier was Pfc Nicolas Llovelis. *Carlo P. Gomez, Inquirer Visayas*

Ailing Sibuyan woman, 78, wants to see kids

JUAN FERNANDO, SIBUYAN Island—With probably only a few more days to live, 78-year-old Adelaida "Nanay Ading" Bepil wishes for nothing more but to be with her six children, whom she has not seen for a long time.

Since Typhoon "Frank" hit this island on June 21, Nanay Ading has been bedridden on the wooden floor of her shanty in Barangay Espana.

At the height of the typhoon, Nanay Ading suffered from the cuts and bruises. Her shanty was damaged, said Guenliver "Big Boy" Sison, 27, parish youth coordinator of the Our Lady of Remedios Parish.

A neighbor tried to carry Nanay Ading to safety, while strong winds were blowing down, but Nanay Ading was too heavy for him so he just covered the old woman, said Boyo.

"She can no longer get up," said Hoyo.

Nanay Ading eats, sleeps, defecates and urinates on the mat, he said.

Parish priest Joey Valencia takes part in bathing the woman as part of his apostolate.

The parishioners have been taking turns feeding Nanay Ading in the small house built for her by the parish.

Boyo appealed to the barrio to help look for Nanay Ading's children. "Her days may be counted. She is weak and always complained of stomach pains," he said.

According to him, Nanay Ading would always mention the name of her favorite daughter and youngest child Sherry, who changed her name to "Jack."

"Bakit hindi niko sila dumalaw? (Why don't they visit me)?" he quoted Nanay Ading as saying.

Before she became sick, Nanay Ading, whose husband died on Christmas Day of 1997, asked for food from his convent and other houses.

Boyo said that since her husband died, her children had started ignoring her.

"When she was stronger, we heard her mention the names of her children," Boyo said.

Aside from Sherry, who is now in Manila, Nanay Ading's children are Renny, Liliane and Melanie, who are all in Bicol, and sons Larry and Ramon, who could not be located.

Boyo said he heard a neighbor saying that Nanay Ading had a sister in Barangay Tandoc, also in this town, who was likewise sick and weak.

He said Nanay Ading had not yet been brought to the doctor for diagnosis.

"Sometimes, we would make her smile by telling her jokes. But behind her smile, we feel the emptiness inside her and that she is alone," he said.

I hope her children would see her condition and take care of her," he said.

Boyo said that if Nanay Ading's children would not show up, he hoped that some people would help bring the old woman to a house for the aged or help support her needs. *Shubereen T. Pabalinas, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

(For those who would like to help Nanay Ading, please contact Guenliver "Big Boy" Boyo at 0918-2180296)

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Late SPORTS

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Magnolia, Ginebra draw first blood

GAMES THURSDAY (Araneta Coliseum)
4:30 p.m.—Rain or Shine vs Barangay Ginebra
7:30 p.m.—Coca-Cola vs Magnolia

By Manong R. Castillo

LORDY TULAGIE SCORED 28 POINTS that raced with a career-high 23 rebounds last night to lead Magnolia to a 108-96 victory over Coca-Cola and draw first blood in the Smart Hotts Cup quarterfinal match up between pre-tournament favorites at the Ynares Sports Arena.

Avid McCaskill also had 30 markers and three more locals finished with 13 points or more as the Beverage Masters seized control early and never let up to move within another win of sealing a semifinal date with ALC.

"It's a short series, this [one] is good," Magnolia coach Siot Tanquingcen said. "But it still doesn't matter anything. We still have to win another game."

In the second game, Mark Caguioa had 30 points and grabbed seven rebounds as Barangay Ginebra rallied from a double-digit first-half deficit and then held off Sta. Lucia in the stretch, 93-90, to also grab a 1-0 lead in their quarterfinal series.

The two quarterfinal pairings go as a sigaki in game 2 Wednesday.

Magnolia wasted the victory even with Danny Seigle taking the bench because of a mid-quadriceps strain as the defense of the Beverage Masters held the usually prolific Aaron Olsen in his worst offensive output.

Olsen, who came into the game averaging 22.6 points and 11.7 rebounds, was held to just six and seven and now expect Brandon Bean was unresponsive in his debut after scoring just eight points.

And the two-import privilege which many saw would be the Tigers' key to landing a title would very well be their undoing.

"We somehow played good defense and sought him on a bad night at the same time," said Tanquingcen of Olsen's lackluster effort.

The score:

Final Game:

MAGNOLIA (108) – McCaskill 30, Tagale 28, Lanete 13, Cortez 13, Ambrosio 11, Mallari 5, Salvacion 5, Salamat 1, Pacaso 1, Wilson 0, Ward 0.

COCA-COLA (96) – Caguioa 30, Mercado 19, Arboleda 11, Hubalde 11, Bumanglag 5, Cabagnot 5, Sanchez 4, Pinto 2, Wilson 0, Ward 0.

Quarters: 24-23, 51-47, 72-66, 108-96

Second Game:

GINEBRA (93) – Caguioa 30, Mercado 19, Arboleda 11, Hubalde 11, Bumanglag 5, Cabagnot 5, Sanchez 4, Pinto 2, Wilson 0, Ward 0.

STA. LUCIA (90) – Wilson 24, Brown 23, Dionisio 9, Reyes 8, Ilas 6, Aquino 4, Miranda 3, Castro 2, Mendoza 0.

Quarters: 14-21, 31-42, 53-66, 93-90

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EARLY SUNDAY MORNING SPOILER

Teen loses SUV to thieves

By Marlon Ramos

A TEENAGER WHO IDENTIFIED HERSELF to police investigators as a daughter of former Bicol Rep. Luis "Chavit" Singson reported the loan of her sport utility vehicle to three armed men in Quezon City yesterday morning.

Kimberly Singson, 18, of Villa Verde 1, Pasig City, went to the Anti-Carnapping Unit (Acacu) of the Quezon City Police District (QCPD) in Camp Karingal on Tuesday to lodge her complaint against the thieves who took her black Toyota Fortuner.

Insp. Angelo Nicolas, QCPD Acacu chief, said the teenager introduced herself to his investigators as Singson's daughter.

PO3 Michael Tuazon, case investigator, said Kimberly, who seemed shaken and scared by the incident, was accompanied by her driver, Teodito Bitoon.

According to Tuazon, Bitoon was inside the SUV (EEF 930), waiting for the teenager who was eating in a seafood restaurant at the corner of Scout De Guia and Tomas Morato Avenue in Sto. Cristo Legaspi Homilo at around 8:20 a.m. yesterday.

When Kimberly boarded the vehicle, three armed men wearing ski masks suddenly appeared from nowhere and dragged her out of the Fortuner.

Tuazon said the car thieves, who were armed with an M16 assault rifle and two caliber 9mm pistols, also ordered Bitoon to alight from the SUV.

TURN TO A24

PCG divers find missing worker's body

By Marlon Ramos

A DAY AFTER A CONSTRUCTION WORKER was reported missing, Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) frogmen recovered his body in an abandoned construction site on the fringes of the Philippines (UP) campus in Diliman, Quezon City yesterday.

The body of Rico Fernel, 35, a resident of Zandueta Street, Barangay Vasra, Quezon City, was found in 10-foot deep water that had filled up an excavation at the 107 Hydraulic Research Center at 10:30 a.m., said case investigator PO3 Joseph Dilo.

WITH REPORTS FROM A24

DID YOU KNOW

BALIUAG City Jail is the most congested prison facility in Metro Manila as of 2008. There are 1,660 inmates in the prison which has a capacity of 106. This is equivalent to a congestion percentage of 1,124 percent.

Following Caloocan City Jail with the Quezon City Jail (615 percent) and Muntinlupa City Jail (522 percent).

CyCC, data/data, Inquirer Research

3 men arrested for stealing gov't property

By Allison W. Lopez

THREE MEN CAUGHT TAKING air equipment from the Virac slaughterhouse in Tondo, Manila, on Saturday have been arrested and charged with stealing government property.

The three were identified as Rodolfo Pangilinan, 36, a resident of Maldones City; Alberto Sapeñido, 35, and Benjamin Bautista, 43, both from Tondo.

On Friday, the Manila City government facility took over the slaughterhouse's operations after its private administrator, Dealer Better Inc., reportedly violated several provisions in its lease contract.

The owners of the facility, Manila Councilor Dennis Alcoreza and Dealer executive vice president Joyce Alcoreza, were bodily removed from the premises by policemen, along with several of their employees, after they refused to leave.

The Alcorezas have claimed that they are being "politically harassed" because Dennis was an ally of Mayor Alfredo Lim's predecessor, Lito Atienza.

The city government ran the slaughterhouse until Atienza turned over its operations to Dealer in 2001.

The facility is said to be the city's biggest slaughterhouse, servicing Metro Manila and the nearby provinces of Bulacan, Laguna and Pampanga.

Senior insp. Marcelo Reyes of the Manila City Hall Police office said in his report that at 2 p.m. Saturday the suspects were leaving the slaughterhouse on board an Isuzu delivery van (UEL 175) when they were stopped by security guards deployed by Manila's Veterinary Inspection Board to guard the facility.

When the watchmen inspected the vehicle, they saw that it contained two air-conditioners, an air compressor/vacuum, assorted air-conveyor tools and four freon tanks.

The three men and they were asked by Dennis Alcoreza to take the items out of the facility.

Makati City expands breastfeeding program

By Oli Yap

MAKATI CITY IS EXPANDING its breastfeeding advocacy to 13 more barangays after successfully promoting the concept to local programs in eight barangays.

City officials announced that the Makati Health Department (MHD) is now training health workers and volunteers in 13 additional barangays, thanks largely to a P400,000 grant from the World Health Organization.

Dr. Ma. Lourdes Sahal, city health officer and MHD chief, said the program was successfully implemented in Pembo, the pilot barangay, in 2005 and had since been replicated in seven other barangays, owing largely to the support of village officials and residents.

"The success gained by Makati in spearheading this worthy initiative in the country has given us the needed impetus to pursue its citywide promotion," Sahal said in a statement.

The program seeks to promote breastfeeding among pregnant women in the community and do away with milk formula to ensure healthier children.

Beginning this year, the MHD expanded its breastfeeding program to 10 more barangays with the help of a financial grant from the WHO, which has also extended technical assistance.

Sahal said the fund is being used for training health workers and volunteers in Barangays La Paz, Singkamas, San Antonio, San Isidro, Olympia, East Rembo, Bel-Air and San Cristobal-Viejo and Diego in District II.

Aside from the pilot barangay, the MHD was able to set up the program in West Rembo, Pio del Pilar, East Rembo, Comembo, Pitogue, Palanan and South Cembo from 2003 to 2007, also with assistance from the WHO.

In August 2005, the city led by Mayor Jejomar Binay launched the country's first model breastfeeding community at City Hall, which seeks to promote a "Mother-Baby Friendly Philippines."

Scientific studies have shown breastfed children to be healthier, smarter, more immune to diseases and have a lower risk of developing diabetes, obesity and cancer later in life.

Citizen's call

0918-8988866

Buses blocking traffic in Alabang are back

"TRAFFIC aides in light green uniforms and MMDA personnel are turning a blind eye to violations of buses waiting for passengers on the northbound road just before the traffic light at the Metropolis mall under the Alabang flyover. Parked buses put in front of the former Muntinlupa Post Office are causing a bottleneck at the intersection, slowing down the flow of traffic. The city government dismantled the illegal bus station at the site months ago but the buses are back, apparently in exchange for something that makes traffic aides and MMDA personnel ignore the violations committed by bus drivers."

LOIS CARRIAL, 27, Daraman, Mandaluyong City

Tricycles hogging main QC roads

PLEASE stop the tricycles coming from Del Monte Avenue in Quezon City from going out to West Avenue. They don't have the right to the six main roads! Sumakem na sila [Their numbers are increasing]! Calling MMDA!

MERRY, 44, Quezon City

Pot holes need fixing, pronto!

CHECK out South Superhighway going to Muntinlupa before the Villamor Port Bonifacio bridge. The road going to Cavite is worsening. From the bridge a lane is taken because the pot holes are so deep, it causes severe traffic problems and damage to passing vehicles. I pass this place every day and nobody seems to be fixing it. Thanks for calling the attention of the persons/agency concerned.

CHERYL C., 36, Pasay City

Dangerous intersection

THE NORTH side of Aseanda Avenue intersection of Gil C-3 Road at the corner of Filipi Revenue Extension in Calamba City is being used as a dump for trucks loaded with sand. The police, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority and City Hall are ignoring this and are just waiting for a catastrophe to happen! With all that dust and sand scattered just 100 meters from a major intersection and an ongoing elementary foundation post of the LRT 5th Avenue Station, a reckless truck driver who has lost his brakes could eventually skid into the intersection and turn into the point! Also, that part of C-3 Road becomes a one-lane street when two dump trucks unload sand and park side by side. Please be warned! If the authorities don't act soon, something bad is bound to happen.

PVC, 37, Calamba City

NEW ISLANDS NOT NECESSARY

R. Hori, 34, of Pasay City writes: "There are the newly-built wide islands on Ninoy Aquino Avenue in front of the main road going to the Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Pasay City. These new islands made the avenue narrower when it was just okay before. Add to that the fact that there are no lights at night or even the drivers about the new structures. With the parked cars also lined up on the street and pedestrians hogging the (Overpass) bridge, why construct new islands to make the avenue congested). These new islands don't have to be there. They just made things worse."

Teen loses SUV to thieves

From page A25

One of the assailants even bit Dejucos's forehead until the front of the intruder where he tried to resist them.

Dejucos said the armed men quickly boarded the vehicle and sped toward an unknown direction.

Nicolas said QCPD chief Senior Supt. Magtanggol Gatdula personally instructed him to ensure the swift resolution of the case and the immediate recovery of the stolen vehicle.

He added that they are now conducting a follow-up operation together with members of the police Highway Patrol Group in Central Luzon.

"We believe the Dominguez-Bonifacio group is behind this carjacking case," Nicolas said over the phone.

Quezon City, the biggest and most populous city in Metro Manila, has been tagged the car theft capital of the country.

A few months ago, a Chinese-Filipino businessman was shot and wounded by armed men who took his vehicle in Barangay Manresa.

Despite these recent incidents, Nicolas said they have managed to bring down the number of car thefts in Quezon City by almost 7% percent.

From a monthly average of seven cases last year, he said Area 4 recorded only two car theft incidents a month from January to June this year.

PCG divers find missing . . .

From page A24

Dibo said they have ruled out foul play in the death of the victim.

"Even the relatives of Fernel did not request an autopsy of the body as they admitted that he would have died of drowning," he said in his report.

According to Dibo, Fernel had just come from a drinking spree with several friends at around 2 p.m. Saturday when he decided to swim in the reservation which had filled up with rainwater.

A few minutes later, one of his drinking buddies sought the help of their neighbors, saying he would not find Fernel.

Yesterday, PCG troopers led by lieutenant Magalong retrieved the bloated body of the victim almost an hour after they started looking for it in the murky water.

Metro Briefs

2 dog meat vendors fall

TWO VENDORS selling dog meat at the entrance started in Sta. Cruz, Manila were nabbed in an entrapment operation by the police on Saturday. Antonio Ruiz, 52, and Ruben Bautista, 56, both Tondo residents, were arrested by the District Special Project Unit of the Manila City Hall at 1:30 p.m. after they sold 20 kilos of dog meat to undercover policemen. Caterinvestigator SPO3 Nemelio Jimena Jr. said Police to Manalili, board member of the Philippine Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, had sought their help after learning that dog meat was being sold in the market. An entrapment was set with undercover policemen going to Ruiz's stall to buy dog meat. The meat was delivered by Bautista who was arrested along with Ruiz. Both men were later charged with violation of Sec. 6 of Republic Act 8485 or the Animal Welfare Act of 1998 while the dog meat was turned over to Manalili's group.

Allison W. Lopez

RMHS Class '63 reunion

CLASS 1963 of the Ramon Magsaysay High School in Cubao, Manila, will hold a reunion on July 19 at the La Colina Resort, La Colina Subdivision in Sta. Rosa City. Sir Charlie Portugal-Arabelle, who is visiting from Montgomery, will host the affair. For details, please contact Mila Bueno-Ambrosio at 4041481 or Alex Ocampo at 9281186.

Iran will destroy Israel, 32 US bases if attacked, official says

TEHRAN—IRAN WOULD DESTROY Israel and 32 US military bases in the Middle East if the Islamic Republic was attacked over its disputed nuclear program, a senior Iranian official was quoted as saying on Saturday.

The Islamic Republic and Israel have been embroiled in an escalating war of words in recent weeks, increasing speculation of military confrontation and helping to send global oil prices to record highs.

Iranian missile tests this week further stoked tension and rattled financial markets.

"The US knows full well that with the smallest move against Iran, Israel and 32 US military bases in the region would be within our of the reach of our missiles and would be destroyed," the semi-official Fars News Agency quoted Mojtaba Zolnour as saying in a speech.

Zolnour is the deputy of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's representative in Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards.

Israel staged an air force exercise last month that sparked speculation about a possible assault on Iranian nuclear sites.

Israel, long assumed to have its own atomic arsenal, has sworn to prevent Iran from emerging as a nuclear-armed power.

Washington has said it favors a diplomatic end to the row but has not ruled out military action should that fail.

Sylvan Freedom Barbar al-Assad, who has close ties with Iranian leaders, said on Saturday he sensed a political welcome on the dispute, adding: "To the best of our knowledge, Iran has no intention of toying in idle, crisis-ridden weapons."

Iran, the world's fourth largest oil exporter, has vowed to strike back at Israel, US interests and shipping in the region if it is attacked, threatening to close the Strait of Hormuz, a conduit for about 40 percent of globally traded oil.

On Wednesday, Iran said it tested nine long- and medium-range missiles, including one which it says could reach Israel and US bases.

Some US facilities across the Gulf are little more than 200 km from Iran's coast. The United States has air and naval bases in nearby Arab states, including Qatar and Bahrain.

In Jerusalem, Ayer Meisel, Israel's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, declined to comment on Zolnour's remarks.

Tehran says its nuclear program are aimed only at generating electricity. Western nations and Israel fear the Islamic Republic is seeking to build bombs.

Analysts say any US or Israeli attack on Iran would be limited to air strikes, rather than a full-scale offensive with US ground forces, which are tied down in Iraq and Afghanistan.

They say Iran could also respond with unconventional tactics, such as deploying small craft to hit ships, or taking allies in the area to strike at US or Israeli interests.

Earlier on Saturday, Iran's government spokesperson, Gholamhossein Elham, warned the United States and Israel it would be "fearless and regrettable" to attack Iran.

The United States and five other major powers have offered Iran economic and other benefits if it halts its uranium enrichment activities, something Tehran says it will not do.

Reuters

A MAN walks past a stand-alone portrait that is a combination of the faces of Democratic presidential candidate US Sen. Barack Obama and former US President Abraham Lincoln in Boston, Massachusetts, on July 11.

REUTERS

In White House race, truth hurts

By Stephen Collinson

WASHINGTON—IN THE POLITical white heat of the US presidential race, the truth cannot get a candidate free, it can only get them into trouble.

The most intense and expensive White House race ever is throwing up a rich catalogue of gaffes and crowd-pleasing untruths.

Republican candidate John McCain, and Democrat Barack Obama have seen their campaigns embroiled in the last few days by opponents who plumbed their foes apparently to their downside.

Former Sen. Phil Gramm, a top McCain adviser, positively lauded America's economic plight when he declared America is a "nation of whiners" mired in a recession of the mind.

Civil rights icon Jesse Jackson broke he is a pantomime Obama supporter—but appeared to betray his real views in a whispered aside on an open microphone.

"I want to cut his nuts off," Jackson said, referring to Obama's unease at talking down to black people.

A few weeks back, Charlie Black, a top McCain adviser sparked a political furor when he suggested a 9-th terrorist strike on the United States could hand McCain, who also enjoys his campaign on national security, a big advantage.

These are classic examples of people blurting out things they believe, but would be wise to keep to themselves—or as columnist Michael Kinsley once famously put it, a gaffe is when a politician tells the truth.

Sometimes the comments of a close adviser raise questions about the credibility of a candidate's campaign itself rhetoric.

Obama foreign policy adviser Samantha Power took a trip to Britain during the primary campaign, and appeared to betray her discretion back home.

Fire also branded Obama's Democratic rival Hillary Clinton a "monster" a sentiment perhaps shared by some inside his campaign, but which just with the high-minded tone he has adopted for his White House bid.

There is another interview, true or suggested, a president Obama would not necessarily be bound by promises to start immediate troop withdrawals from Iraq.

She resigned shortly after words.

History will surround the row sparked when Obama was decrying the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) also in the primary campaign.

A Canadian government memo quoted one of his advisers Austan Goolsbee as reassuring Canadian officials that this was just campaign rhetoric.

The campaign said Goolsbee had been misrepresented, and he survived.

It is not just surrogates who can get them in trouble Obama-McCain's senior-most nominees-cause him problems.

Last week, at tensions with Whitehall, McCain was told by a journalist that US signatories to Iran had ceased, "Maybe that's a way out of Iraq," he quipped, before hurriedly adding: "I meant that as a joke."

It was not the first time McCain had joked about Tehran. "That old Beach Boys song, 'Bomb Iran'" he told supporters at a campaign event last year "Bomb, bomb, bomb ..." he sang to the tune of the hit "Barbara Ann."

Perhaps the underlying message of all these missteps is that in a campaign as long, and intense as this, with the prospect of YouTube infamy beckoning at every public event, candidates and their backers are bound to make mistakes.

Clinton's bid for the Democratic nomination may just be a necessary one, but she left behind some classic campaign missteps.

One of her top Iowa backers, campaign Bill Shaheen put words what many of her aides may have been thinking in private—how would Republicans explain Obama's admitted drug use as a rebellious youth.

"If he, when was the last time, did you ever give drugs to anyone?" Shaheen said, and was soon cut loose by the Clinton campaign.

Even Bill Clinton, recovered as the more sophisticated politician of his generation, stumbled into verbal minefields.

The former president branded Obama's anti-Iraq war record a "fairy tale" prompting Obama supporters to complain he was belittling the fine African-American with a real chance of winning the presidency.

AFP

US considers stepping up pace of Iraq pullout

WASHINGTON—THE BUSH administration is considering plans to withdraw additional US combat forces from Iraq beginning in September, according to administration and military officials, raising the prospect of a far more ambitious pace than expected only months ago.

One factor in the considerations is the growing belief by senior American troops in Afghanistan, where the Taliban and other fighters have consolidated their insurgency and inflicted a growing number of casualties on Afghan and American-led forces there.

More American and allied troops died in Afghanistan than in Iraq in May and June, a grim trend that has continued this month.

Although no decision has been made, by the time President Bush leaves office on Jan. 20, at least one and as many as three of the 15 combat brigades currently in Iraq could be withdrawn or at least scheduled for withdrawal, the officials said.

The desire to move more quickly reflects the view of many in the Pentagon who want to ease the strain on the military that has been in five more troops in Afghanistan and potentially other missions.

"As the Iraqi security forces get stronger and get better, then we will be able to continue drawing down our troops in the future," Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates said in Fort Lewis, Washington Tuesday. "And I think that the transition of control and of responsibility, primary responsibility for security is a process that's already well under way and based on everything that I'm hearing will be able to continue."

One senior administration official cautioned that the president, who will have the final say, would be reluctant to endorse deep or rapid reductions if they jeopardized his goal of establishing a stable and democratic government in Baghdad.

Still, there is broad consensus in Washington and Baghdad that more American forces can now leave Iraq and that more are needed in Afghanistan. NYT

DEFT LAMA

A lama touches his nose with the tip of his tongue during the Monlam Chenmo festival at the Mentsi monastery, 45 km south of Leh in India, on July 13.

REUTERS

US Army deserters no longer find haven in Canada

TORONTO—JOSHUA CURRY likes aggressive musicians and US Army deserters, was keeping an unusually close eye on the war manager coming into his cell phone. He was hoping to hear that a court had blocked the Canadian government's move to send him back to the United States.

On Wednesday afternoon, the message came: Glass, 25, could remain in Canada while he appealed his removal order by the country's Immigration Department. The appeal, he said, has well short of a guarantee that he and other deserters could make Canada their new home.

The Canadian government's effort to remove Glass contrasts with the warm reception given to deserters and draft resisters from the United States during the war in Vietnam. And although the war in Iraq has very little support among Canadians, they are more divided than others who abandoned their military positions provokes a wide range of responses. For American soldiers seeking asylum, Canada is no longer a guaranteed haven.

During the Vietnam War, the Liberal prime minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, welcomed American deserters and draft dodgers, declaring that Canada "should be a refuge from militarism." Americans who arrived more generally able to obtain legal immigrant status simply by applying at the border, or even after they entered Canada.

But while the current Conservative government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper has not rescinded that welcome, it has shown little sympathy for American deserters. During a recent parliamentary debate, Laurie Hawn, a Conservative from Alberta, asked, "Why do they not fight it will be to their own legal system instead of being here as refugees in Canada?"

No American deserter of the Iraq war has been deported by the Canadian government, but that is not for lack of effort. Immigration authorities have ordered about nine deserters to leave Canada, leading to public battles in the courts.

A big difference between the current round of deserters and those during the Vietnam War appears to be wide media coverage, and support for those left determine back home.

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AFP

Yahoo rejects Microsoft 'take it or leave it' offer

SAN FRANCISCO—YAHOO Inc. has rejected Microsoft's latest attempt to buy its online search operations in a "take or leave it" proposal that Yahoo said would have diminished its investor franchise.

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Backed into a corner, Yahoo lashed out in a blunt statement likely to leave many more bad blood into its already enamorous relationship with Microsoft and Icahn.

"It is ludicrous to think that our board could accept such a proposal," Yahoo Chair Roy Bostock said in the statement. "While this represents a weak and unpredictable behavior is consistent with what we have come to expect from Microsoft, we will not be bludgeoned into a transaction that is not in the best interests of our stockholders."

Yahoo said it unanimously rejected Microsoft's unsolicited offer to buy the company's search engine and proposed instead to own the remaining parent to a board controlled by Icahn.

Yahoo said it received the complex proposal Friday and was given less than 24 hours to respond.

Suspicions mount in Israel against Olmert

JERUSALEM—SUSPICIONS OF fraud mounted on Sunday against Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert with the publication in a newspaper of what it said were invoices backing up his allegations he made duplicate claims for travel expenses.

Denying any wrongdoing, Olmert flew to Paris for the launch of a Israeli-inspired Mediterranean Union and renewed calls by Israel for his corruption to the latest chapter—dubbed "Olmert Tours" by the Israeli media—of a corruption probe.

On Friday, police said they were now examining whether Olmert, as mayor of Jerusalem and then trade minister, received duplicate funding for travel abroad from different public bodies and used the excess money to pay for private family trips.

The veteran politician has long made visits overseas to deliver fund-raising speeches for various charities and groups or to speak at pro-Israeli events.

The Haaretz newspaper published on Sunday on its front page copies of what it said were two documents from the Rishon Tours travel company that charged two organizations for the same flights Olmert took between New York and Tel Aviv.

The first invoice, dated May 18, 2003, and stating "Pre: Mr. Olmert/Ehud," billed Israel's Education Ministry for $6,614.60 for a first-class, round-trip ticket, with a June 8, 2003, departure date and a return leg on June 9.

The second, dated May 24, 2003, and also listing Olmert's name, billed the Israel Policy Forum $7,823.65 for the identical flights.

Olmert, Haaretz said, appeared at separate events for both organizations during his brief stay in New York. The newspaper did not disclose how it obtained the invoices.

Olmert, who served as mayor of Jerusalem for 10 years until 2003 and then as a Cabinet minister before succeeding Ariel Sharon as prime minister in early 2006, rejected the allegations that surfaced after he was questioned by police on Feb. 28 for a third time in the corruption investigations.

"The reports and the leaks that emerged a short time after the questioning constitute a gory breach of confidentiality norms," Olmert told reporters on the plane to Paris.

"I was amazed by those distorted statements coming from members of law enforcement apparatus ... This would only harm the public's trust," Olmert said.

The corruption case, which had focused on testimony from US fundraiser Morris Talansky that he had given Olmert $150,000 over 15 years, could force him from office and disrupt peace efforts he has begun with the Palestinians and Syria.

"The public has no longer tolerance for this mockery," legislator Ruhi Ydzhovich of the Labour Party, Olmert's main coalition partner, told Israel Radio, demanding he quit. "There's a limit to what the citizens of Israel should take from this person."

Reuters

OLMERT

The WORLD

Lilia Leverea B. Bueza

Pope Benedict begins Australia visit

Says he will apologize for sexual abuse by priests

SYDNEY—POPE BENEDICT XVI ARRIVED IN Sydney on Sunday for one of the largest Christian gatherings on Earth, starting a visit set to be marked by his apology for sexual abuse by priests in Australia.

The spiritual leader of the world's 1.1 billion Catholics was met by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Sydney Archbishop George Pell as he began his nine-day trip, his first here since becoming Pontiff in 2005.

The Pope is in Australia for World Youth Day, a celebration of the Catholic faith aimed at young people that is expected to draw more than 100,000 foreign pilgrims to the city and an estimated 500,000 in events.

But his visit comes as the issue of sexual abuse by the clergy has again hit headlines in Australia, where a case which has recently come to light has reignited concerns about the church's ability to deal with the problem.

Benedict, who apologized for abuse and took the unexpected step of meeting with victims of predator priests during his April trip to the United States, has said he will address the issue in Australia.

Speaking in journalists during his 20-hour flight here, the 81-year-old Pontiff said he would examine how the Catholic Church can "prevent, heal and reconcile" the past crimes of the clergy.

"This is the essential context of what we will say as we apologize," he said.

Speaking ahead of his landing in Sydney, the Pontiff said the main messages of his visit will include an emphasis on environmental concerns and "our responsibility towards creation."

"We must awaken consciousness," he told reporters.

"We have to face up to this great challenge and find the ethical capacity to change the situation of the environment for the good."

Asked whether he was concerned about holding a major religious event in a country secular, the Pope said Australia was a part of the western world and, as such, shared its successes and problems.

He said there was a crisis of religion in Europe, where the positivist conviction was that "We do not need God to be happy, we do not need God to create a better world. God is not necessary."

He said this was not so much the case in the United States and Australia.

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"Do the other kinds [God is in the hearts of human beings] and can never disappear," he said.

"There is always a presence of faith. Now in this historical moment we begin to see some belief again, in this sense I am fairly optimistic." AFP

THE POPE being greeted by Australia's senior cleric Cardinal George Pell (center) and others on arriving at Richmond Air Force Base near Sydney on July 13. AFP

Jolie gives birth to twins

PARIS—THE BRANGELINA twins are here. Angelina Jolie has given birth to a girl and a boy.

The obstetrician who delivered the twins, Dr. Michel Dommange, said that the actress, the babies and Jolie's partner, actor Brad Pitt, "are doing marvelously well."

Dommange said Jolie gave birth to a boy, Knox Leon, and a girl, Vivienne Marcheline, by Cesarean section on Saturday night.

He said on Sunday morning that the boy weighed 2.28 kilograms (5.03 pounds) and the girl 2.27 kilograms (5 pounds).

He was there during the operation, said the doctor, who delivered the twins at the seaside Lenval hospital in Nice in southern France.

He said the Caesarian was necessary because it was the surgically planned date "for medical reasons" so that the babies could be born "in the best conditions."

Jolie and Pitt already have four children: Maddox, 6; Pax, 4; Zahara, 3; and Shiloh, 2.

Jolie had checked into the hospital late last month to rest and be monitored by her doctor before the birth.

The four photos of the new twins are expected to fetch millions of dollars (euros). AP

ACTORS Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt in photo taken in Santa Monica, California, on Feb. 22. AFP

Lebanon, Syria to establish diplomatic ties

PARIS—LEBANON AND SYRIA said on Saturday that they had agreed to establish diplomatic relations, opening embassies in each others' capitals for the first time since their independence from colonial rule.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy announced the landmark decision following talks with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and Lebanese President Michel Sleiman, whose election to May ended a drawn-out political crisis in Lebanon.

"For France, this is historic progress," Sarkozy told a press conference.

"Of course there are a number of legal questions that have to be settled... but for us... this announcement is absolutely historic. It is great news for all those who love Lebanon and are concerned by developments there," he said.

President Assad said Sleiman confirmed the news at a joint press conference later on Saturday.

"Our position is that there is no problem for the opening of embassies between Syria and Lebanon," said Assad.

"If Lebanon is willing to exchange embassies, we have no objections in doing it," he added.

For Lebanon, Sleiman confirmed that the new government were going to "work together to put everything in motion as soon as possible."

Relations between Syria and Lebanon have been tense since the forced withdrawal of Syria's troops from the country in April 2005 after the assassination of billionaire former premier Rafiq Hariri.

Syria was widely blamed for the killing but denies involvement.

Assad last month said there were no ready to open an embassy in Lebanon over a unity government was formed and had developed good relations with Syria.

Lebanon announced a 30-member national unity government on Friday tasked with resolving the country's worst political crisis since a 1975-1990 civil war.

The Syrian and Lebanese leaders met at the French presidential palace in the presence of Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, whose country brokered the power-sharing deal that led to Lebanon's election. AFP

Zimbabwe: Sanctions failure a victory over racism

HARARE—ZIMBABWE ON SATurday welcomed the failure of a Western-backed UN Security Council resolution to impose sanctions over its violent presidential elections, calling it a victory over racism and meddling in its affairs.

Russia and China on Friday vetoed the resolution, which would have imposed an arms embargo on the southern African country and financial and travel restrictions on President Robert Mugabe and 13 other officials.

Britain said Russia's veto was "unacceptable," while Russia said sanctions would have set a dangerous precedent of political interference. Russia, China and regional powerhouse South Africa said the resolution would have hurt the talks between the ruling ZANU-PF party and the opposition.

"We are very happy with the turn of events and would like to thank those who helped defeat international action disguised as multilateral action at the UN," Zimbabwean Information Minister Sikhanyiso Ndlovu said.

"The principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity have been vindicated. What has the UN got to do with parliamentary matter elections?" he said.

Zimbabwe's opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai defeated Mugabe in a March 29 presidential election but failed to get enough votes to avoid a second ballot. Reuters

PASSAPORT favorite Miss Venezuela Dayana Mendoza. AFP

Global beauties in nail-biting wait on eve of pageant

NHA TRANG, VIETNAM—Looked away in a Vietnamese fantasy resort on Sunday the eve of the Miss Universe pageant, are 86 of the world's most beautiful women, anxiously rounding who is the best of them all.

For a gruelling month, they have strutted their stuff in swimsuits, high heels and evening gowns, national costumes and "fun-costume on the sand," trying to catch the eyes and win the hearts of jury panelists.

They have braved the tropical summer heat, a hectic travel schedule and endless rehearsals, local crowds and paparazzi, and even a bat that flew inside circles through the spotlight of one of the many preliminary events.

But the moment of truth—when 59 dreams are crushed and one wears tiara—was fast approaching in this 57th edition of a winner-takes-all contest that, organizers say, will be watched by a billion people in 179 countries.

The "Final Night" show starts at 8 a.m. Monday here to coincide with the prime-time Saturday evening TV slot in the United States, home of the extravaganza that is co-owned by real-estate celebrity Donald Trump.

Speculation on the front-runner has run hot in the palm-fringed resort town of Nha Trang, buried by pageant bloggers and scraps of gossip that have trickled out of the resort where the women are sequestered away.

Many favored Miss Venezuela, 22-year-old Dayana Mendoza, height 175cms/5 foot 10, whose country is admired here as a "pageant powerhouse" that has long dished out winners with makeovers, English classes and stunning practise.

"She seems to come with that attitude that, no matter what happens on the final night, you're only a Miss Universe contestant once in your life and you have to enjoy it," confessed one contest insider who asked not to be named.

"She has really endeared herself to the Vietnamese. She even stepped in for us [at an] event and she did well. She showed remarkable poise."

Miss Venezuela was also the hot favorite of punters on the betting website vegas.sportsbook.com, followed by other Western hemisphere beauties from Puerto Rico, Panama, the United States and Colombia.

The long-legged ranks of hopefuls were last week whittled out to 15 semi-finalists, although the shortlist has been kept a tightly-guarded secret, even from the contestants.

The select group of women with a shot at the diamond-studded gold crown will only be announced just-way through the show, before judges further slash their numbers in the swimsuit and evening gown sections.

The final interviews will be crunch-time in the contest covered by US talk show host Jerry Springer and Britain's ex-"Spice Girl" pop star Mel B, so drama-mine who will succeed Japan's Riyo Mori as Miss Universe.

No matter who takes the $1,20,000-crown—and the cash, prizes, tiara, New York City luxury apartment and year of free world travel that go with it—Vietnam already considers itself the real winner of the event.

Vietnam lobbied hard last year to become the first communist nation to host a Miss Universe contest. Seemingly as a call, it was also chosen last week as the location for the rival Miss World pageant in 2010. AFP

WHAT'S INSIDE
Mexican Solis foils Donaire's historic bid /A31

SPORTS
Editor Tokdyric S. Melendres Assistant Editor Francis T.J. Ochoa

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RYAN Buensalido of Ateneo looks to pass after running into a UE double team of Gino Estrella (left) and Elmer Espiritu.

Hot Eagles out front; Falcons rip Bulldogs

By Jaemee W. Pape

THEY TIME, IT'S THE ATENEO BLUE EAGLES who are making winning a routine.

Rabeh Al-Hussani led a dominant performance by throwing his mean at the Eagles subdued the University of the East Warriors, 84-70, yesterday to remain as the only unbeaten team in the 71st UAAP men's basketball tournament at the Philsports Arena.

"We utilized our size and it's not just our size at the front, but also the size of our guards," said coach Norman Black after the Eagles romped up an impressive first week that included wins over rival La Salle and Adamson.

"It's a good start. We're on track with our goal, which is to make it to the Final Four. I know that mentally during the UAAP season, it's a bumpy road. So it's good to get off to a good start and have a few wins behind us."

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Alex files charges versus BSCP today

FORMER WORLD POOL champion Alex Pagulayan will file a libel case today against officials of the Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines ahead of a pair of duels they screened him of "shark-ing" an opponent during a match in the Singapore leg of the Chivas-ion 9-Ball Tour.

Pagulayan is likewise suing the BSCP for preventing him from joining the remainder of the 2007 Guinness Tour.

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PAGULAYAN: "I'm no shark."

Fund woes hound 2 AsPac champs

By Cedrik F. Tapay

TNPO BACOLOD NEGROS LITTLE League softball teams which clinched World Series slots by beating just one team each in the Asia-Pacific Softball Championships in Guangzhou, China, over the weekend are hard-pressed to raise P1 million for their airfare to the United States.

Philippine Little League district director Jolly Gomez is said to have threatened to give the World Series slots to teams if he doesn't get any assurance from team officials by next week that they would be able to raise enough funds for their campaign.

Bacolod Negros officials said Gomez also told them they "should be interested (only) because they are always beset by financial problems."

The Ba Bay Junior League (13-14) and Major League (11-12) teams bound for Midland, Washington, and Portland, Oregon, respectively will be given P1,000 each by World Series organizers to finance their overseas excursions.

But the Bacolod-Negros Senior League (14-16) team will be getting the full subsidy of P10,000 since they won over two other teams—Chinese and Guam—in the zone round.

The three baseball teams were actually bounded by financial woes in the Asia-Pacific. Organizers were about to send them home until the Philippine Sports Commission advanced their entry fees totaling P9,000.

The World Series begins on Aug. 4 and Gomez said the Philippines would face questions from the international body if it fails to send an entry in any division for which it qualified.

The Bacolod-Negros teams have qualified every year for the World Series since 1998 with Brgy. Estefania Village National High School winning the Junior League crown in 2000, and Education and Training Center School finishing second three years later.

DUMAGUETE'S Edwar de Chavez re-slides into home plate to beat the throw to Manila catcher Ramond Raja.

Bulls rampage to finals

Batangas clouters oust Cebu; Unibikers stall Sharks

By Marc Anthony Reyes

BATANGAS UNLEASHED FIVE RUNS in the fourth inning and held on to eliminate host 2 Batangas Cebu, 7-5, yesterday and advance to the best-of-three championship playoffs of the baseball Philippines Series 1 at the Metal Mecanical ballpark.

Jonash Bauer hit a two-run home run to spark a three-run rally by the Dolphins in the eighth inning, but the Bulls were not to be denied as they shut out the enemy in the ninth.

Batangas won't know its title rival until next Saturday, however, as Batangueños defied the odds by bringing down elimination contender and top semifinalist Manila, 14-10, in a rain-delayed, five-inning second finish.

The Defenders, fresh from wiping out Taguig's series-to-beat edge in the quarterfinals, broke a 7-7 tie on a two-run homer by designated hitter Markus Cappillo in the fifth before exploding for five runs in the seventh for a 14-7 lead.

Kelly Colmenares joined the Cebu run spree off national team ace Charlie Labrador with a run-scoring triple before stealing home against the Sharks, who choked many after a long break.

Batangueños, now unbeaten in its last four games, and Manila collide again this Saturday with the winners advancing against Batangas the next day.

But even a heavy downpour could cool off the fury of the Defenders, who nibbled Jhon Hinolo pitches for 11 hits.

Batangueños blasted Manila starter Rhik Nadurduat for five runs then jacked up four more against Romeo Acosta, who took over in the fourth inning, and five of Labrador.

Winning pitcher Dinerlo dela Calzada also had a rough start, conceding five runs in the first two innings as Manila posted a 5-3 lead. But he steadied himself from there before yielding the reins to hand Placido to the seventh.

Although Hinolo came up with three runs in the eighth to close in at 13-14, Placido expertly clamped the rally by striking out the side to the ninth.

Hot Eagles out front; Falcons rip Bulldogs

From page A19

Al Hamzah, the 6-foot-8 half brother of fast Bull's Carlo Sharma, hosted a game-high 18 points aside from hauling down 17 rebounds and dishing out three assists.

"The big men stepped up for us, they really got in the boards," said Mark Yee. "Hamzah had a big game for us and we facilitated our offense to (rookie) Ryan Buenafe in the end, it really helped a great deal."

It's the first loss in three games for the Nueteen, who merge all 14 elimination games last season before bowing to La Salle in the Finals.

The Nueteen played without top backup guard Paul Lee, who recently contracted dengue.

Earlier, Mare Aguirre celebrated his return to Ateneum by powering the Falcons to their first victory in three matches, 75-61, over the National University Bulldogs.

The 6-foot-6 sharpshooter finished last season dean's list student-athlete (SAC) by burying three 3-point balls on an impressive 7 of 11 clip from the field.

"I'm really surprised with Marc," said Ateneum coach Leo Austria of his 2002-batch forward, the oldest son of 1991 PBA Most Valuable Player Nic Aguirre.

"This is my second year with him and this is the first time he played this well. He's important to us because he's one of only two veterans left in the roster."

The Bulldogs, who dabbled to their third straight loss, came back from 22-31 to 36-31 at the break behind Ateneum-left in the classified (down) hero, who finished with 22 points.

But Alex Nuyles helped restore the Falcons' lead by shooting seven of their next 12 points for a 51-47 advantage.

Aguirre kept the Falcons ahead for the rest of the fourth quarter, hauling down to a 72-63 edge with 1:40 remaining.

"There's pressure," said Austria, who secured to Ateneum after a year-long stint as Ateneum coach in the PBA. "People expect a lot from us because of our pre-season run. But on paper, we're really just (ranked) No. 7. I guess it's our system that's making us a contender."

Jason Ballesteros and Jeff Ingles pulled away by drilling eight unanswered points with four minutes left. As the Warriors' scoring drought continued, the Eagles cruised to their first double-digit lead at 83-72 at the 2:46 mark.

Claire Tiu added 11 points and four assists for Ateneum while Bautista and Bruno Bacho contributed 10 apiece.

Lions shoot for No. 3 against Stags

SAN BEDA KICKOFF FOR a share of the lead today when it hosts Perpetual Help at the Mendiola in the first of a doubleheader at 2 p.m.

At stake in the 2 p.m. encounter will send the two-time defending champion Red Lions on equal footing with last year's losing finalist Letran at three wins in as many games.

"We have to remember that we were where San Sebastian," said Lions head coach Nandoy Lim, whose Lions needed a last-quarter blast from Roger Hernidez and Jhaps Gamalinda to rally past the Philippine Christian U Dolphins, 72-63, Wednesday.

The win still left Lim worried as his players started out flat.

"We can't afford to let that happen again or we will only make it difficult for ourselves," Lim added.

Meanwhile, a PCU squad playing its fourth game in as many playdates hopes to finally nail its first victory against struggling Perpetual Help at 4 p.m.

Coach Joel Cruz has blamed the Dolphins' lack of preparation for their seven two-weeks-and-three-consecutive-losses.

"Playing in the NCAA is no joke," he said. "Our mental preparation is just not enough."

The Lions are expected to miss backup power forward Ebru Jake Bustal, who has been hampered because of a still unrevamped illness. Lim said Bustal was sidelined by a flu bacteria.

Cedrik F. Tapay

SPORTSWATCH

MCC Open chess Saturday

UNRATED AMATEUR TITLE PLAYERS are eying a the July edition of the MCC Open standard chess tournament which gets under way at 11 a.m. on Saturday at the D. Rosca Square building beside Old Megamall in Mandaluyong City.

The two-day event, which offers a total cash P10,000 in prizes, is expected to draw four rounds (Swiss system). For inquiries, call 634-10 90 or 0918-852-1060.

Pasay anniversary derby on

THE PASAY CITY COUNCIL CELEBRATES its 22nd anniversary today with a big 9-rock derby with P5 million at stake.

The first batch of participants from a field of more than 1500 will compete tomorrow (July 1) in each eliminations. The second round is on Wednesday with the finals set on Friday. Entry fee is P10,000.

As in previous anniversary derbies, the PCC management will give away bonus prizes to participants and enthusiasts.

WTJ bares annual staglest

THE WTJ SPORTS AND AMUSEMENT Corp. will launch the WTJ Annual 7-Stag Derby on Aug. 31 and 25 at the Makati Coliseum with P700,000 at stake.

Promoters Lito Orbeta and Porky Salut of WTJ said the staglest will replace the Richard J. Gahol Annual Stag Derby.

The 60-year-old Gahol, originally from Tanauan, decided to temporarily forego his annual staglest due to health reasons.

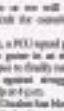
Sales personnel slag derbies in the Philippines by staging the first-ever slag derby at the Tomas Pinpin Garden in Cubao last Sunday.

Baguio Victory cagers finish third

BAGUIO—KEVINE DAHAS UNloaded 22 points and Reuter Benjamin Mangubat added 21 as the Baguio Victory turned back the Iloilo Mining Friends, 85-80, yesterday to bag third place in Match 1 of the Cupa Philippine Star elimination phase here.

The Victory lost a nine-point first-quarter lead, but came together for a spirited run in the second half, steadily cutting a late surge by the Mining Friends.

Baguio led, 81-73, going to the last two minutes.



LALA PERFECTO

But just when the Mining Friends were being written off, they rallied for a frenzied behind Chino Jaime, who finished with 24 points, to within 83-80 with 31 seconds left.

The Highlanders were not to be denied, though, and hung on from the free throw line with Jason Tiongson and Mangubat hitting a clutch-shot each.

Ongoing at press time was the 6-and-game between the Lipa Sundaes and the Taguig-Cavite Heroes.

The scores:

BAGUIO 85—Dahas 22, Benjamin 21, Tiongson 15, Mangubat 21, Lopez 2, Bautista 0, Nuyles 0, Ramos 0, Cabanero 0, Cabrera 0, Ramos 0, Cabanero 0, Cabrera 0, Ramos 0, Cabanero 0, Cabrera

Mexican Solis foils Donaire's historic bid

FILIPINO-AMERICAN GLENN DONAIRE fell short in his attempt to make history yesterday morning for his 122 lights flyweight title of Efren Solis, who won by a disputed unanimous decision in Sonora, Mexico.

"Donaire won the aggressor all through out the fight and he connected more than Solis," reported PhilBoxing.com's Ed De la Vega, who scrutinized how the three judges came up with a near disputed scores of 116-109, 115-109 and 115-107.

De la Vega said Donaire took the initiative in the fight, and delivered the cleaner punches while stalking the back-pedalling Solis, who somehow managed to effectively counter in the later rounds.

Referee Raul Rascal took a point off Solis for a headbutt, but it was apparently not reflected in the judges' scorecards.

"The final scores didn't reflect as such—quite frankly they didn't even suggest—that all three judges bestowed so many more than one point," said John Evasco of boxingscene.com who was quoted by PhilBoxing.com.

'Bizarre scores'

Donaire added that the Mexican won via "bizarre scores" and even hinted that the scores were the result of rigged wagering.

Had he won the fight, Donaire would have made history with his younger brother Nonito Jr., who holds the IBF flyweight title, as the only brothers in Philippine boxing history to hold world titles at the same time. Donito Boy and Gerry Penalosa also were world titlist but not at the same time.

The loss sets Donaire's record slip to 27-1-1, with 17 KOs while Solis improved to 27-1-2, 19 KOs and is now 3-0 against Filipino fighters, having earlier beaten Rodel Mayol and Rod Salanguit.

In the main event, cuts and bottles flew into the ring after Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. was announced as the winner over Matt Vanda, after two scorecard the former fighter of the night.cut. Nelven L. Laguardia, com.ph@yahoo

SOLIS

TOUR DE FRANCE

Team Columbia makes move

TOULOUSE, FRANCE—ONE DAY AFTER DOPING HIT CYCLING yet again, a team that boasts the profile of drug scandals, all too well sped to victory on Saturday as the daunting climbs of the Pyrenees awaited Tour de France riders.

Britain's Mark Cavendish captured the eighth stage in a rain-soaked finish, his second stage victory in the three-week race.

That was only part of the story for Team Columbia, Germany's Gerald Ciolek took second place and Luxembourger Kim Kirchen (who the leader's yellow jersey. The white jersey for the race's best young rider belonged to a Columbia rider, Sweden's Thomas Lovkvist.

"To finish with a 1-2 and have Kim in yellow, you can't do better than that," Cavendish said. "When I'm there in the sprint and third up, normally I can win."

Kirchen was the overnight choice of Cadel Evans of Australia in the overall standings, with Stefan Schumacher of Germany 14 seconds back and Christian Vandevelde of the US 44 behind.

The Italian team Liquigas began the day without Spanish veteran Manuel Beltran, who tested positive for the blood-booster EPO after the first stage a week ago. Beltran was taken briefly in to police custody and booted to the airport after his release.

Liquigas sporting director Roberto Amadio said Beltran denied having taken EPO, and the team was insistent there was no organized doping in its ranks.

But the Columbia riders who finished 1-2 on Saturday were not the same ones who rode in Chihuahua—the story was all too familiar.

During last year's Tour, it was revealed that Colombia rider Iván Ramiro Parra had tested positive for testosterone a month before the race. Colombian sideswiped taking the drug and was fired by the team and banned.

Colombia withdrew from cycling at the end of last season until a backlash in Germany. AP

MARK Cavendish (left) leads a fellow cyclist to the finish.

Klitschko KOs Thompson, retains heavyweight titles

KLITSCHKO

BERLIN—WLADIMIR Klitschko was forced to rally to stop one of boxing's best champions. He's just as tough right here.

With his left instinctive, Klitschko knocked out former sparring partner Tony Thompson in the 11th round with a big right to successfully defend his heavyweight titles on home turf.

"My job didn't work, I had to use the right—I think it doesn't work, for Plan B," Klitschko said after he retained his IBF and runner WBO and IBO heavyweight titles.

Klitschko (53-3, 49 knockouts) turned boxer-boxers, sending the American to the canvas 1:20 into the 11th. He redeemed himself after in eight 10th to which he pushed Thompson to the canvas and fell on him.

Klitschko's ninth straight win was tougher than expected, as he had to survive a second-round head-butt that left both fighters bleeding at the right eye.

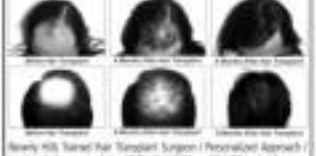
"I'm still world champion, but it's about three titles now—that means wonderful. But fight me is extra motivated," Klitschko said. "I haven't had a black eye for a long time, now I really look like a fighter."

His corner swamped the cut, but the face was marked by the fight. His left eye was swollen shut as Thompson caught him with several good shots, repeatedly a fifth-round right hook.

But Klitschko was ahead on the cards and caught Thompson in the sixth with two good right to take control of the fight. He fired after the seventh—until he charged out to the 11th round and finished the knockout punch.

"They were both hard, but Wladimir has experience now, then he came back with a second wind," Klitschko trainer Emanuel Steward said. AP

PERMANENT AND NATURAL HAIR



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Creamer grabs 4-stroke edge; Rosales shoots 69

CREAMER

SYDAMA, OHIO—ANGELA CREAMER SHOT a 1-under-par 70, 1-0 more than she needed for her first round, and still held a four-stroke lead after three rounds of the Annie Par Classic Coming Classic on Saturday.

Creamer, who set the course record with her opening 63, was at 14-under 195 through 54 holes at Highland Meadows. The 21-year-old American had a 69 in the second round.

"You know, winning wire-to-wire—that's difficult to do," Creamer said. "There's a lot of pressure on you in that situation, especially when you throw a 63 the first day and anything higher than that everybody thinks, 'What's going on? What's wrong?'"

Jennifer Rosales of the Philippines shot a 69 but still stood 11 shots off the lead with a three-round total of 206.

South Korea's Ji Eun-hee was in second place, as she has been after all three rounds. She shot a 68 to cut two strokes off of Creamer's lead.

"Today you could see that Paula didn't have her best day but at the same time I wasn't really having my A game as well," Ji said through an interpreter.

Sorabel Heidenreich had a 67 and was alone in third at 202. Karrie Webb made the biggest move of the day shooting a 65 to climb into a tie for fourth with Gloria Park and Shanshan Feng, who shot a 66. They were both at 203.

"I was playing my best ball-striking round of the year," said Webb.

Defending champion Ai Miyazato, trying to become the first US LPGA player to win the same tournament on more, had a 72 and finished 14 shots back. Michelle Wie shot a 71 and was at 213. AP

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Pablito, 47

FLORENCIO VILLENA PABLITO, SISTER OF PHILIPPINE STAR SPORTSWRITER MAI VILLENA and brother-in-law of PSN Sports Editor Gina Marie Villena, died on Friday of cardiac arrest.

She was 47.

Her body lies in state at Arlington Chapel, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

She is survived by husband Raul, daughters Arlene and Rizanne, brother Carolino, sisters Rosalinda, Florabella and Avelina, nieces and nephews.

Interment will be announced later.

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BEST RATES GUARANTEED

Gov't trims 6-month budget gap to P18B

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■ **SMC banking prospect** to raise additional P5B /B8

Less than half of ₱40.7-B ceiling

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT LIKELY KEPT ITS budget deficit at about P18 billion or only half the programmed deficit level in the first semester despite higher spending pressures from skyrocketing food and fuel prices, preliminary government estimates showed.

Based on an estimate recently presented to the Cabinet-level Development Budget Coordination Committee by the Department of Budget and Management, the six-month deficit was almost at par with the P18.8-billion shortfall incurred from January to May cap DBCC sources said.

The January-to-June fiscal deficit accounted for only 44 percent of the government's deficit ceiling of P40.7 billion for the period. During the same period last year, the country's gross domestic product (GDP) this year, its various units have not been able to absorb additional funding as fast as intended, the DBCC sources said.

In a separate interview, Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran said he has yet to see the final budget tally for the first half but admits talked about the P39-billion deficit estimate, he said this was possible.

"It means that the budget position was almost balanced for the month of June, which is possible because for this month, the programmed deficit is only 16.45 billion," Beltran said.

He said revenue collections were generally good for June, with the Bureau of Customs alone posting an overperformance of about P7 bil-

CONT'D ON B2

Cautious trading to continue

THE STOCK MARKET IS EXPECTED TO trade within a narrow range this week as caution remains to be the color of the week.

CONT'D ON B3

PLDT sme nation Count on me, partner

Page 01

Beyond Banking

Ric Cuaderno C. Ruiz, SANTECO President & CEO

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BSP seen raising rates this week

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By Clark C. Dunlao

THE MANILA CENTRAL BANK (BSP) is widely expected to raise key interest rates for the second straight month on Thursday but the market is split on whether a quarter or a more aggressive half a percentage point increase would be suitable to counter rising consumer prices amid a slowing economy.

An Inquirer survey of 30 big commercial banks on Friday showed that half held the view that the inflation-targeting central bank would jack up the rates by half a percentage point to 5.75 percent during the July 17 Monetary Board meeting given the surge in inflation to double-digit levels.

But the other half said a more conservative quarter percentage point rise would be enough as a more drastic move could choke the economy. In the first quarter, the local economy posted a slower than-expected growth of 5.2 percent.

"As they say, (do it) slowly" said Benito Vergara, treasurer at the state-owned Land Bank of the Philippines.

Aurelio Montinola III said that in the next quarter or until the end of the year, the BSP would likely tighten by 25 basis points three times.

"Some people are saying 18 mill hike (by 225 basis points), but I think it will only be 75 basis points for the year," Montinola said.

"First of all, you have the signaling. I think that in the fourth quarter, because of the increase in inflation over the base (period) you already have been quite high, by the fourth quarter or the first quarter of next year, it's going to flatten or come down," he said.

However, he said the 11.1 year high inflation of 11.4 percent posted in June next year can be the peak of consumer prices in economic this year.

But others said half a percentage point might be needed to address the situation of negative interest rates in the economy, or a situation where inflation is higher than the interest rate, thus giving investors no reason to hold on to peso-denominated assets. The BSP is battling criticisms from some institutions such as the International Monetary Fund that its current rate policy was "behind the curve."

Aside from skyrocketing food and fuel prices, the peso's sharp depreciation this year has also contributed to higher inflation.

The peso has now fallen by 9.6 percent against the dollar this year, losing its better than last year when it rallied by 29 percent against the greenback to become Asia's best performing currency.

The local currency, which closed at 45.04 to a dollar on Friday, has now edged out the South Korean won as Asia's worst performing currency. The won has tumbled 7 percent this year.

In a July 10 commentary, the global economics unit of Nomura Securities said the Philippines, Turkey and Thailand would likely raise key interest rates this week.

"Central banks will still have more to do to beat inflation—to expect more rate hikes over the coming months to prevent sharp currency depreciation [as in Asia last week]," Nomura said.

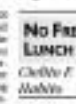
When inflation is on the rise, central banks tend to tighten an monetary policy to stop up stress such that may fuel consumer and business spending and thus aggressive inflationary pressures.

Army said inflation should peak out in emerging markets during the second half of 2008 and likely trigger a big bonds rally and a renewed stocks bull market.

"When equities will bottom is a more difficult call as bond funding flows still tend to be worked through," it said.

On Friday, BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the central bank has targeted to review its 2008 inflation forecast of 7-9 percent to factor in additional pressures from the new round of transport fare adjustments.

Will cutting taxes help the poor?



NO FREE LUNCH
Cielito F. Habito

THE CLAMOR EVERYWHERE FOR RELIEF from the rapid price inflation now being felt is overwhelming all price increases and elevated fiscal prices. Perhaps the most prominent among the solutions now being suggested is tax relief, particularly the removal of taxes on petroleum products and electricity. The apparent premise is that eliminating such taxes will help the great majority of Filipinos, especially the poor, to confront the impacts of the rapid rise in the cost of living. But will it really? Will cutting taxes on energy products help the poor more than the rich?

Progressive vs regressive

The question really boils down to who bears the burden of the taxes. We can look at the distribution of the burden of a tax in two ways. We can determine how much of the government's collections from the tax come out of the pockets of the different income classes. This would give us the distribution of the collective burden borne by the rich vs. the poor.

We can also determine the proportion (percentage) of the income of the different income groups that are taken by the tax. Strictly going on the income burden borne by the rich vs. the poor, it can tell us whether a tax is considered as "progressive" when it takes a bigger percentage out of the income (thereby being a heavier burden) of a rich capitalist than of a poor laborer who earns a penny one. It is called "regressive" when it does the opposite: that is, if the tax hurts a poor family more than it does a rich one.

Direct vs indirect

Taxes are also classified based on whether their burden can be passed on or not. A direct tax is one whose burden is borne directly by the one who pays it; that is, it cannot be passed on. Examples are income taxes and wealth taxes. The person or company earning the income, or owning, say, the land or house being taxed, cannot pass on the tax to someone else. The buck, as they say, stops with the one paying the tax. On the other hand, taxes on transactions...like the value-added tax (VAT), customs duties, excise taxes, etc...are called indirect taxes. They are collected by the government from the sellers/producers, but they can be and are indeed routinely passed on to buyers/consumers by adding the tax to the selling price.

Direct taxes tend to be progressive, usually by design. The higher one's income bracket, for example, the larger the percentage of income one applies. Indirect taxes, which are ultimately taxes on spending, will generally be regressive in effect for a basic reason: the rich do not spend all of their income, while the poor do (often not even earning enough for their required spending). Thus, as a percentage of income, indirect taxes as a whole will be automatically higher for a poor family than for a rich one.

Indirect and progressive

But taken alone, certain indirect taxes, like the VAT or excise taxes on certain products, can be progressive or regressive in effect, depending on how the taxed product figures in the typical budget of the rich vs. the poor. A tax on the sale of jewelry and pubra, for example, would clearly be progressive, while a tax on rice, normal goods and basic staple foodies would be regressive. For this reason, primary agricultural products, including rice, have been exempted from the VAT from the very beginning.

This brings us back to the original question: Will cutting taxes most help the poor? In principle, will removing the 10% VAT on power for the rich as well as the poor help in helping the rich more by doing so? One need not examine the data from the Family Income and Expenditures Survey to see that the richer income households spend proportionately more for gasoline and electric power than poorer households do. Whether as a share of tax collections or as a share of household income, taxes on petroleum and electricity hit the poor a lot less than their higher-income counterparts. Thus, cutting these taxes would only help the latter more. Cutting the VAT as a whole would have largely the same effect, inasmuch as the products most dominant in the budgets of the poor are already VAT-free to begin with.

Reverse Robin Hood?

So when suggestions are made for government to cut the VAT, or excises in general or specifically on energy products, I worry that the well-meaning advocates of such a move are unwittingly pushing for taking from the poor to give to the rich. Government's track record already shows that the first things to get cut when revenues run short are social services that benefit the poor. Moreover, the destabilizing effects of a larger government deficit—including heavier debt service, higher interest rates, and, worse, higher inflation itself—ultimately hit the poor much more than the rich.

Cut taxes to help the poor? Right influence? I'd look for better ways.

The author welcomes comments at chabito@inquirer.com.ph

Gov't trims budget gap ...

From page B1

line compared to its goal.

Customs collections was on the back of tariffs collected on the large importation of oil and rice in June, Beltran said. The final fiscal deficit report for the first semester will be announced later this month.

President Macapagal-Arroyo earlier announced that government would no longer aim for a zero budget deficit this year in order to spend more to cushion poor Filipinos from the impact of rising consumer prices.

The International Monetary Fund earlier said the government could afford a "small" budget deficit of P75 billion this year to shield the poor from the harsh impact of rising food and fuel prices. But the fund also

Cautious trading to continue

From page B1

Analysts said uncertainties linger as the Bangko Sentral is poised to raise interest rates. To ease market uncertainty further is the fall in Wall Street last Friday on record prices of over $147 a barrel and fears of capital deficit involving two American mortgage financing giants.

"Overall concerns now that if a change in accounting procedure is implemented, large US mortgage companies Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae suffer further losses in new capital. If this happens, the US financial sector may remain sluggish and far from recovery," All Capital securities wrote in a weekly report.

Meantime, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas will maintain a policy bias toward tightening despite signs that inflation expectations remained anchored, BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo said on Friday, ahead of next week's Monetary Board meeting.

Rates for public loans, rents and projects were also raised Friday, and oil and food prices remained high levels.

The central bank still discuss interest rates on Thursday two weeks after official data showed annual inflation in June hit a 14-year high.

The local market's movement is still highly affected by oil prices and, to some extent, by the US market. The PSEi may consolidate this week in anticipation of second quarter corporate earnings reports," All Capital Securities said. Rhoderick Asuncion, Lazcano

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Bill seeks VAT removal, higher excise tax on oil

By Michelle V. Ramos

A BILL REMOVING THE VALUE-ADDED tax on oil products but raising the excise tax on such products has been filed in the House of Representatives in a bid to partly relieve consumers of the burden of surging consumer prices.

House Bill No. 4260, authored by Ako-Bicol Rep. Emerenciana Jaraula, seeks to lift the 12-percent VAT on oil because such a tax is based on price. The rising prices of oil, therefore, require consumers to pay more taxes even if the volume of consumption remains the same, Jaraula explained.

"It is no longer conscionable for the government to reap windfall revenue from the value-added tax as the price of oil spirals with no end in sight, while our people groan from the burden of oil price increases," Jaraula said in the bill's explanatory note.

On the other hand, the congressman said, a specific tax like the excise tax is based on the volume of consumption. A consumer who buys the same volume of oil will have to pay the same amount of excise tax even if the price rises, he explained.

Oil is currently covered by both excise tax and VAT. To partly compensate for the lost tax revenues to result from the proposed removal of the VAT, the bill also calls for the increase in the excise tax rate.

The proposed increase in the excise tax rates are: Naphtha, regular gasoline and aviation gasoline, from P4.35 to P11.30 a liter; premium gasoline, from P4.35 to P12 a liter; aviation turbo jet fuel, from P3.67 to P6 a liter; diesel fuel oil and similar fuel oils, from zero to P2.50 a liter; and liquefied petroleum gas, from zero to 10% a liter.

The House committee on ways and means has asked the Department of Finance to study the bill and to comment on it.

An official from the DOF said it has not yet finalized its stand on the issue of replacing VAT with a higher excise tax, but said such a proposal both has merits and disadvantages. The official cannot be named because he is not authorized to speak for the DOF.

The advantage is that consumers will be spared from paying higher taxes with the increase in the prices of oil, the official said. The disadvantage is that the government will not be able to collect supposed additional taxes from companies that increase their profits due to rising prices.

Arroyo said his bill would be a win-win solution for the government and consumers.

The government was being urged to lift the VAT on oil amid surging crude prices in the world market. High oil prices were being blamed for the accelerated increase in prices of other commodities.

But the DOF said lifting the VAT on oil would mean P73 billion in lost potential tax collection for the government. Such money is needed to boost spending on social services, such as food and health subsidies to poor families who are having difficulty coping with higher prices of commodities.

Arroyo said that with his bill, the government will not have to substantially sacrifice tax collection but, at the same time, temper the burden carried by consumers.

Win-win formula in raging price debate

Money supply growth slows to 5%

By Doris C. Dumlao

GROWTH IN THE COUNTRY'S broad money supply slowed down sharply to about 5 percent in April or nearly half the 9-percent pace a month ago despite the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' previous spate of interest rate cuts, central bank statistics said.

A preliminary report to the BSP's policy-making Monetary Board last week pinned that to an environment of rising inflation, there was a "substantial" and "puzzling" decline in the year-on-year growth of domestic liquidity in April from 9.6 percent in March, the sources said.

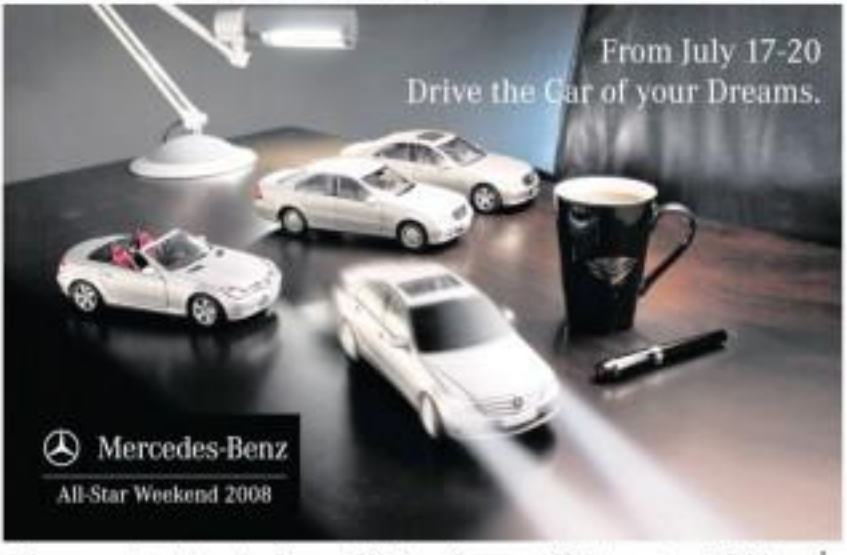
One of the key indicators closely watched by the BSP in managing inflation, domestic liquidity or M3 is the broadest measure of money and is used to estimate the entire supply of money within an economy. It includes cash in circulation, demand deposits, money market funds and short-term securities buyback agreements.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the central bank was still reviewing the latest numbers on domestic liquidity given the shift to a new financial reporting methodology. But he said there was ample money supply for domestic expansion.

"There are many sources of borrowing for corporations these days, not just banks. They can raise funds from the bond market," Tetangco said.

Asked about the 5-percent estimated growth in domestic liquidity for April, BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo explained that inflation was driven by many factors, not just liquidity levels and money supply. In fact, he said the BSP's move to liquidity growth did not mean that the central bank could not afford to be biased toward monetary tightening.

"In the past, there was a one-to-one relationship between money supply on one hand, and output and inflation, on the other. During the times when you have a 9-percent growth (in gross domestic product) and 5-percent growth in inflation, more or less 10 percent will be a good number," he said.



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Pacific Online OKs buyback of 2M shares

Sees 25% profit growth

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lazaro

ONLINE LOTTERY EQUIPMENT provider Pacific Online Systems Corp. is planning to buy back two million shares for roughly P20 million to prevent dilution.

In a disclosure, Pacific Online said its board has approved the share buyback plan.

The company also said it has approved a cash dividend of eight centavos a share with a record date of Aug. 8 and an...other 17 centavos a share with a record date of Nov. 17.

Separately, the company said the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office has authorized the corporation to sell an additional 20 million lotto 6-tickets at P30 a ticket, or equivalent to additional sales of P600 million for PCSO.

Pacific Online is expecting its revenues this year to grow 25 percent to P600 million from P479 million from lottery-games abuse, boosted by more terminals, games and additional draws.

The sales target assumes a similar 25 percent growth in total revenues of the PCSO, the government-controlled numbers lottery games, to P6 billion this year from P4.8 billion in 2007.

For the first five months, Pacific Online's share in revenues from lotto games amounted to P209 million or 30 percent of total lotto revenues of P156 billion. Pacific Online gets a 7.8 percent share in revenues from lottery games operated by PCSO.

The introduction of a new game called 9-to-win, which will be launched this month, is seen further expanding demand for games. Drawdowns will be held on 9PM and targeted at the "S" and "B" market.

Alliance Global nears deal with Star Cruises

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lazaro

ALLIANCE GLOBAL GROUP Inc. is close to signing a deal with Hong Kong-listed Star Cruises Ltd. for a stake in Malaysian's tourism arm, Travelers International Hotel Group Inc.

Travelbest will undertake the development of Manila's Hotel in cooperation with Star Cruises, which is also Alliance Global's partner for its stake in the Manila Bay Tourism City project of Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor).

"We hope to close the deal by the end of this month," Alliance Global chair Andrew Tan said. He declined to elaborate.

Malaysian conglomerate Genting Group and Alliance Global are looking at investing more than $1 billion in the mega-bid multi-billion-dollar casino and tourism complex at the 40-hectare Manila Bay reclamation area.

Alliance Global president Kingson Sian had said that the consortium was still working out the terms of the joint venture deed as foreign partner was still conducting a due diligence audit.

Sian also said the project might consist of a hotel casino within the complex, possibly a theme park and potential for condominium units.

Big hotel chains flocking to RP

Accor, Banyan Tree latest to ride on tourism wave

By Rosvel P. Domingo

THE PHILIPPINES IS ATTRACTing more interest from global and regional hotel chains as industry leaders Accor and Banyan Tree Holdings seek to open a hotels and resort in Cebu, Boracay and Palawan by 2010.

Ms. Victoria V. Jasmin, director of the Department of Tourism's investment promotions group, said in an interview that Singapore's Banyan Hospitality Indian's Taj group and Malaysia's Kangdom were also on the lookout for possible projects in the Philippines.

Jasmin said the Accor and Banyan Tree projects were on top of the P5.9 billion worth of investments that the DOT had endorsed for incentives between January and May this year.

The France-based Accor has entered into a joint venture with the Ayala Group to build a four-star hotel at the Ayala Center in Cebu, Queson City.

To be called Harvard Manila, Ayala's Center, the hotel will be adjacent to the Ayala Coliseum and is expected to open in 2010.

The new Harvard will have 475 rooms, a 600-square meter ballroom and large meeting facilities that would cater to business clients as well as the meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions market.

Singapore-based Banyan Tree has entered into a joint venture with mining and coal miner Asiaprime Holdings Inc. Consortium IT to develop and operate two luxury resorts on Dimiao Island in northern Palawan at a total cost of $170 million.

Banyan Tree and Consortium plan to make the combined 50.300-hectare island ready by 2010.

"The Tropang Nau site is relatively remote in a nearby property to the main island of Palawan, but another company had already put it," Jasmin said.

A unit of the Tata group of companies, Taj Hotels, Resorts and Palaces has 57 hotels in 49 locations across India and 16 international hotels in the Maldives, Mauritius, Malaysia, Australia, United Kingdom, United States, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Africa and the Middle East.

Taj executives from Accor, Taj and other hotel and resort chains were here last week to take part in the 3rd Asian Tourism Investment Promotion held in Pasay City.

"We facilitated the Taj group scouting out the, and Taj is interested in building a high-rise hotel in Makati as well as a resort outside Metro Manila," the official added.

The Taj group was represented by Rajit Gupta, chief of the firm's mergers, acquisitions and development group.

"Gupta said they were looking at investing in a hotel with a floor area of between 10,000 and 12,000 square meters," Jasmin said.

She added that Francis was looking into expanding its Philippine operations with several spa hotels while Kangdom was eyeing its first location outside Malaysia.

Francis is known for the hotels Fraser Suites, Fraser Residences and FraserSuites—one of which is in Makati.

Kangdom Hotel Int'l Malaysia is the biggest mid-range hotel chain in Malaysia, with presence in at least 10 locations concentrated in the Malaysian peninsula.

In a previous interview, Tourism Secretary Ace Durano said the development of facilities and infrastructure for tourism was outstripping up-front growing demand.

Durano said all these projects would help propose Cebu could by the arrival of two million visitors by 2010.

Exports to Taiwan hit $765.92M in April

MERCHANDISE EXPORTS TO TAIWAN rose by 9.58 percent to $765.92 million in the first months in April, continuing the increase and that started in the first quarter.

Data from Taipei's Government Statistics Office show that the value of shipments from the Philippines during the four-month period increased from about $698.09 million in the same period in 2007.

From January to April, two-way merchandise trade with Taiwan improved by about 18 percent to $2.54 billion from $2.19 billion in the same period last year.

Taiwanese shipments to the Philippines totaled at some $1.776 billion, increasing by 19.09 percent from $1.49 billion.

As of end-April, Taiwan maintained a trade surplus with $1.01 billion, growing 27.46 percent from $793.72 million.

Further, the Taiwan CIO reported that the Philippines became Taiwan's 16th largest trading partner, accounting for 1.61 percent of the global economy's total global trade, which was valued at about $1.68 trillion.

As of April, the Philippines is Taiwan's seventh largest trade partner among developing countries—excluding mainland China—after South Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and Hong Kong.

China is Taiwan's largest trading partner with a 20.12-percent share or $34.15 billion of the latter's aggregate trade in terms of free-on-board value.

Also, the Philippines ranked 21st—down by 4 notch from March rankings—among the largest sources of Taiwan's imports, accounting for 0.93 percent of total Taiwan-bound shipments worth some $82.3 billion.

In terms of Taiwanese exports, the Philippines was the 18th largest destination with 2.86 percent of total outbound cargo valued at some $80.68 billion.

To improve trade with Taiwan, the Manila Economic and Cultural Office and the Philippine Trade and Investment Center in Taipei embarked on an investment mission last month, focusing on investment opportunities in the Subic and Clark free ports.

In its August bulletin, Moro director for commercial affairs Ms. Mercedes Ang highlighted opportunities in information and communications technology, light manufacturing, tourism, logistics and shipbuilding services.

Rosvel B. Domingo

RP forges deal for more flights to Netherlands

By Rea T. Olchondra

THE PHILIPPINES SECURED MORE flights and cargo entitlements with the Netherlands to serve the growing demand from overseas workers and tourists, according to Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza.

"Right now, KLM of Netherlands is the only European airline with flights between Manila and Amsterdam. We hope the new (it should) will allow Philippine carriers to serve Europe and give more choices to our overseas workers, also to you bet on business and leisure. And it (the agreement) further opens up our skies especially to Clark, our new gateway," Mendoza said in an interview.

Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) executive director Cecilia C. Jacinto said in a separate interview that the new deal provided for seven Manila-Amsterdam flights a week, seven Clark-Amsterdam flights and another seven to three fleets to other international airports in the Philippines.

The old agreement signed in 1995 provided for only four weekly flights to Manila and four weekly flights to Amsterdam.

Fifth freedom rights were also seven into the new deal. This means that the carriers flying between the Philippines and the Netherlands can go to a third country before completing the route. For example, KLM can go to a Gulf country before going to Manila, and vice versa.

The agreement was a major victory for Clark, which did not have carrier from Amsterdam until now. Besides passenger flights, the new Philippine gateway also covered cargo entitlements of 700 tons weekly outbound traffic, only 200 less for Manila.

Data from the Department of Tourism shows that traffic between Manila and Amsterdam has been increasing from a two-way volume of 186,894 in 2003 to 208,293 in 2006 and 213,078 in 2007. Load factors also improved steadily from 85 percent in 2003 to 88 percent in 2006 and 89 percent in 2007.

The growth rate of visitors numbers going into the Philippines from the Netherlands is 3.4 percent and rises the rest of Europe, 13.84 percent.

The Philippines so passed bid by DOTC Undersecretary Damian Reyes and his counterpart Jr. Victor Stouten signed the agreement last July 13.

DOE prepares to grant new contracts

By Abigail L. Ho

FOLLOWING ITS RECENT MINING of new energy contracts, the Department of Energy is now preparing for its fourth energy contracting round.

Acting Energy Undersecretary Ramon Allan Oca said the DOE had identified at least four areas for oil and gas exploration, five sites for coal mining, and two to three areas for geothermal development that would be included in the next bidding round.

It will consist of the remaining areas offered under the 2006 Philippine Energy Contracting Round (PECR 2006) would be awarded in the next few months, he said the next bidding round would be launched before year's end.

The DOE has last week awarded three geothermal service contracts—all from PECR 2006.

Three areas, with a combined potential of around 300 megawatts (MW), are in Malitbog in Bukidnon, Bulalo in Bulalo Province and Amacon in Compostela Valley.

The Malitbog site was awarded to Basic Energy Corp., the Bulalo contract to Bulalo Geothermal Inc. and the Amacon site to Goldstein Mountain Corp.

Oca said satellite geothermal area, the first in the Kalinga province, would soon be awarded to Alsthom and partner Aragorn Power and Energy Corp.

The DOE would like to be awarding three more contracts next month, the time for the development of coal sites in various parts of the country. Three coal sites will form part of areas offered under the PECR 2006.

Four new petroleum service contracts were also awarded last May to Mavorex Mining and Energy Corp., Hollow Petroleum and Gas Corp., Burgundy Global Exploration Corp. and Northern Energy Philippines Inc.

For the five service contracts, the four companies are expected to invest as much as $82.2 million in new investments, according to data from the DOE.

Two more petroleum service contracts were just awarding Malacañang's negotiation. Oca said, before these could be awarded.

These service contracts were for Pedrosel Development International Co. Ltd. for the Central Luzon Basin (Area 2) and Philex Petroleum Ltd. for the Mindoro-Cuyo Basin Block 2 (Area 4).

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You may not know it, but chances are, there is some form of fraud happening in your business. The annual global study of 1,134 companies in 40 countries conducted by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners found that corruption and bribery schemes are taking kickbacks or bribes. In any other kind of scam. Fraud comes in many forms and is a widespread problem that affects practically every organization, regardless of size, location, or industry.

Fraud steals a company's competitive edge. It increases the cost of goods and services which can lead to bankruptcy. The cliché, "An ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure" makes good business sense. But, while prevention is not enough, a business organization must take more active steps, such as learning how to detect fraud.

In a pioneering program to help businesses both big and small, the Center for Global Best Practices in collaboration with Punongbayan & Araullo (P&A), is holding a seminar entitled, "Preventing & Detecting Business Fraud and Theft" schedules on August 21 & 22, 2008 at the Peninsula Hotel, Makati City. The 2-day seminar will expose participants to the many names and forms of fraud. The event will cover the essentials in identifying fraud and knowing how to prevent it from happening to your business.

This once a year seminar will cover finance, legal, IT, investigative and other aspects to fraud control your business. The panel of speakers is composed of experts in the field of preventing and detecting fraud, namely, forensic accounting expert Juan Carlos Robles, P&A business risk partner, Patrick Nebblet, executive officer of the anti-fraud division of the National Bureau of Investigation, Atty. Cesario Pelayo, partner at Picazo Law Office, and Patrick Dasko, managing director of CrisPinoy.

Group discounts are available for a group of three or more participants in the event. Attendees are encouraged to avail of the early bird discounts until July 31, 2008. Registration forms with discount details and other seminar information may be found at the website www.cgbp.org. Interested attendees may email their queries at gcc@cgbp.org or call 892-7126 or 28. Pre-registration is required for this limited-seats-only CPE accredited seminar.

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Fresh air breathed into Dating Marathon

TRUST ASTRIG G-SOL TE SEING A Greatly of fresh air will fo Astring G-sol Dating Marathon.

Last recently Astring G-sol fo-kod off the highly anticipated Dating Marathon with a shindig that happened at the Bigfish Je-throred in the House Party at Embassy Super Club.

But this male-and female-singletons, this was the perfect venue to spot new and interesting people. The lovely set majorly took on the challenge of putting the long lasting Jershaven premier of Astring G-sol to the test by means of a Dating Marathon.

The interactive soul set Extended In-kol-li party was hosted by JDG's "Chill Spot" hosts Gabe Bernardino and Kenjo Wolnack, who delighted the attendees with sound dating advice and engaged them in fun and games.

The singletons were asked to proceed to the Astring G-sol Dating Lounge for the Dating Marathon with the Astring G-sol Hunks and Ladies. These models later served how participants made Dating improvements.

The Astring G-sol Dating Marathon was also held on Saturday, Quezon City; Tomplo, Cavite; and Lucena, Makati City; Big Kahuna Bar & Grill, Eastwood; Barrio El Fredo at the CAP Building2, Cagayan de Oro City; The Loft, Lahug 2F Park, Cebu City; The Promenade, Davao City; and at Herald, Baguio City.

Known for giving long-lasting fresh breath, Astring G-sol also came under one confident in joining the Dating Marathon.

1ST WORLD MASTERCARD IN RP LAUNCHED

Allied Bank, Philippine Airlines and MasterCard Inc. on a morning unveiling the new partnership which is touted to be the 1st World MasterCard in the Philippines. Malcolm Allen, Allied Bank's Executive Vice President, said the new card embodies the most prestigious credit card in the MasterCard platform, which is tailored for the affluent consumer segment. Providing entertainment perks, preferential access to exclusive events and invitations, exclusivity and exceptional service, the Malcolm Allen World Mastercard offers a high credit limit, assistance from Dollar Mileage and the lowest acquisition rates in the market. Allied Bank launched the card on Monday. Also in photo are Allied Bank Executive Vice President Jaime Ongsiako, Philippine Airlines Senior Vice President Jose Dennis Lopez, Allied Bank EVP and Marketing Group Head Peter Yap, Philippine Airlines Executive Vice President and CEO Lance Gokongwei and MasterCard country manager Paolo Vila Real.

Groundbreaking collaboration turns up the fun at 'Pugad Dencio's'

THEY'RE THE 11TH TURNED OUT TO BE A fun, rocking night on Scratch-It Set 40, home to Quezon City's homebred a ground-breaking collaboration that features refreshing old favorites of the famed-friendly restaurant into Pugad Dencio's, a happier happier place with more mouth-watering choices or its menu.

With the mike head together launching the new Dencio's single, "Pugad," live and happening band Asindi Ngallo. Sugar Free, a beloved and bestselling "Pugad Baboy" roster book order in Bonifacio now driver of the restaurant. June 13 saw the overflow capacity crowd at the Sct. Alfonso branch of Dencio's partying the night away.

"It's the perfect synergy," says Dencio's marketing head Asindi Ngallo. "Sugar Free is a match up of (members) who are professionals in their own right but who create hit songs that reflect their love spirit." "Pugad Baboy", on the other hand, "is all about families bonding over food," Ngallo adds.

Carnevale Del agnese. "It's a perfect match. A complete cast of characters shows up in our canvass representing all types of Pinoys. Just like Dencio's, which caters to all and meets the demanding taste of everyone from the single mom to the workaholic Ate to the weekend dad."

Frontman Bin of Sagrafino finally remembers single spend at the Bed over Dencio's in the Sct. Alfonso branch. "We had a jamming night. Fid in a sheet party promises to be just as memorable.

He says, "My brothers and I have always been big fans of Fid Mcbride's 'Pugad Baboy.' We actually asked 'Pugad Baboy' hosts Mel's unmistakable Pinoy humor has kept us laughing through the years."

Gemini Espino, managing director for Lincoln Division, said Dencio's new menus from premium meats of the kind of comfort foods people grow up with. "The new offerings will be 'nostalgic' favorites that people 'fight' over at the dining table at home," he says. "It's comparison to the most enjoyable way to share a piece of crispy pata, or a spoonful of pinakbet."

In, when celebrated 594 meets pop icon Sugarfree, expect what you love most about Dencio's amped to a happy, happier degree.

Dencio's is also available for parties, big events or simply cravings. Make your reservations online through the Dencio's website at www.dencios.ph, or call hotline 839-6181 for details.

DANILO L. CONCEPCION
LIQUIDATOR, REYNOLDS PHILIPPINES CORPORATION
(in) 2701 88B Corporate Center, Valero corner Sedeño Streets, Salcedo Village, Makati City

NOTICE OF LAST DAY TO FILE CLAIM

IN RE: REYNOLDS PHILIPPINES CORPORATION, SEC CASE NO. 08-04-31, SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

TO ALL GENERAL AND UNSECURED CREDITORS:

Please take notice that all persons who have general and unsecured claims or interest of any kind against REYNOLDS PHILIPPINES CORPORATION are enjoined to file their written claims with the undersigned POSITIVELY AND NOT LATER THAN 15 AUGUST 2008. This is the last day by which a claim may be filed. Any claim not filed on or before 15 August 2008 shall forever be barred.

All written claims, including the proofs thereof, must be filed with Atty. Danilo L. Concepcion, Liquidator, Reynolds Philippines Corporation, Unit 2701, 88B Corporate Center, 141 Valero corner Valero Streets, Salcedo Village, Makati City.

(Sgd.) ATTY. DANILO L. CONCEPCION

SOUTHERN LEYTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
Sabang, Baybay City, Southern Leyte
Tel. # (053) 561-2140; (053) 561-2199; Telefax (053) 570-9828

INVITATION FOR BIDS

SOUTHERN LEYTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. (SOLECO) invites sealed bids for the supply, delivery, installation, commissioning of a 50MVA 69/13.2kV Circuit Breaker, SF6 Relay and Circuit Recloser, 12.2kV with Complete Advance Protection and Metering at Sabang SS.

Interested bidders may apply for accreditation on or before August 12, 2008.

Eligible bidders may obtain further information and secure bidding documents from SOLECO main office at Sabang, Baybay City, Southern Leyte upon payment of a non-refundable fee of FIVE THOUSAND PESOS ONLY (P5,000.00). Pre-bid conference is on August 13, 2008 @ 10:00 at SOLECO Main Office. Failure to attend pre-bid conference can no longer participate in the bidding.

Interested bidders must submit sealed bid proposal by 2 Security Board at Vice Chairman Office of the said office and be received by SOLECO at Sabang, Baybay City, on or before 10:00 AM on August 20, 2008 at which time and place the bids will be opened in the presence of bidders or authorized representatives.

SOLECO reserves the right to reject any or all bids whenever the interests of the Cooperative so demand.

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

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SMC banking prospect to raise additional P5B

By Doris C. Dumlao

BANK OF COMMERCE PLANS TO raise another P5 billion sometime in the last half of the year through a combined offering of subordinated notes and hybrid debt papers.

The bank is reportedly being groomed to be the banking unit of San Miguel Corp. pinal Ban Miguel Corp.

In a recent interview, Bank of Commerce president Raul de Rivas said that, on top of the additional P3 billion to be pumped in by SMC, the bank was preparing for additional banking firepower to tune to capital structure to P15 billion.

Proceeds from the planned subordinated notes offer would qualify as tier 2, or supplementary capital, while Base-Dean Hybrid notes would be eligible as tier 1, or core capital.

Hybrid debt is considered to have both equity-like features that would make them acceptable as capital. They may be in the form of unsecured subordinated debt or perhaps shares with interest rate stepping features.

"We'll do it (the proceeds) to expand geographically," De Rivas said. "We'll adopt a new business model and it's going to be a slightly different model, outside of the traditional but it will involve lending."

He added that the bank had a business plan, "but that was limited by the size of our capital."

"We have to remit that plan because we now have expanded [capability]," De Rivas said.

SMC is set to double its stake in BOC from P2 to P4 billion, which will increase its interest to 51 percent, from the 39-percent stake it held at the end of last year, De Rivas said.

SMC has already infused the first installment of P500 million in additional equity and will pump in the rest once the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has approved the petition to increase BOC's authorized capital, he said.

The capital-raising exercises are expected to beef up the bank's capital adequacy ratio to about 12 percent by year's end, up from 11 percent in 2007.

By expanding its commercial banking operations, BOC hopes to engage in unsullied activities like insurance and property development.

In particular, it wants to get into bancassurance, or the selling of insurance products through banks.

Gov't lawyers seek criminal suit against mine developer

By Dazzle L. Lucas

STATE PROSECUTORS HAVE RECommended the filing of charges against officers of Citinickel Mines and Development Corp. after finding probable cause that the firm may have engaged in the theft of minerals.

The case is now before a complaint filed by the Ilihan and Goco investors Bureau of the DOJ and the Provincial Mining Regulatory Board (PMRB) of Puerto Princesa City Palawan.

According to the complaint, Citinickel—a subsidiary of publicly listed Citinickel Philippines Resources Corp.—illegally extracted and removed thousand quantities of Ilihan nickel, Sulfonic Espanola, Palawan.

In a statement, representatives of Platinum Group Metals Corp. announced the impending lawsuit against officers of Citinickel Mines and by its president Cristina Tan-Chic.

Platinum Group is engaged in a legal battle with Oriental Peninsula Inc. control over a limestone nickel mine in Dipterix.

On May 16, 2007, authorities caught a payloader and four 10-wheel trucks owned by Citinickel in the act of illegally excavating and transporting aggregates and filling materials in a nearby road construction site, the complaint stated.

The company said the materials were mined for a concessionary building in its nearby pier.

But the complainants alleged that Citinickel conducted these activities without a permit from the PMRB. Because of this, local government units (LGUs) could not have collected the proceeds and concluding that, as with the extracted aggregates and filling materials worth an estimated P1 million.

In their defense, Tan-Chic and other officers of Citinickel said the company has been paying the taxes due and was done "in good faith and without any interest [for] gain."

Citinickel said the activities were undertaken to fulfill its obligations under the Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA) and for the welfare of the Barangay Panitig and its residents.

But the Justice Department countered that good faith and lack of interest to gain is not a defense in cases where the offender is in violation of a special law. It also pointed out that, in this case, Citinickel was not only extracting and transporting aggregates and filling materials.

Money supply ...

Money supply (M3) is the sum of currency outside banks; demand deposits other than those of the central government; and the time, savings, and foreign currency deposits of resident sectors other than the central government. M3 is a broad measure of liquidity and is frequently used as an indicator of the extent of inflationary pressures arising from monetary expansion. For many countries, however, there has been a decline in the usefulness of M3 as a leading indicator of inflation and a shift towards narrower measures of money, such as M1, or towards credit aggregates reflecting the balance sheet of the banking system. This reflects financial innovation and changing relationships between money and income.

In the light of these developments, many central banks have de-emphasized the use of monetary aggregates in the conduct of monetary policy, shifting towards a framework in which interest rates play a more prominent role. Nevertheless, money and credit aggregates continue to play an important role in the information set used to formulate monetary policy, serving as important information variables in macroeconomic models and as key indicators in the assessment of risks to price stability.

Source: European Central Bank

Pira engages GSIS in yet another court battle

INSURANCE COMMISSION has been prevented the Government Service Insurance System from increasing its insurance premium rates for compulsory third party liability (CTPL) insurance policies by engaging in another court battle to block the proposed measure.

Last Friday, the Philippine Insurers and Reinsurers Association (Pira) filed a petition with the Makati Regional Trial Court, asking it to reconsider its decision to dismiss the case against the Department of Transportation and Communications.

Last year, the DOTC issued Department Order 2007-28 that mandated the GSIS to be the sole provider of CTPL insurance as vehicle owners in the country.

Pira said the order was unconstitutional because it would result to a monopoly of the CTPL insurance, in the case filed by Pira, the group said the DOTC had no authority to enact such an order.

The court dismissed the case for technical reasons. In its decision, the court said Pira lacked evidence to prove that the DOTC had no authority to issue orders like DOTC 2007-28 in question. The court said Pira should have instead filed a case directly against the perceived unconstitutionality of the department order.

According to Atty. Gonzalo Pira Jr., outside counsel, affiliates, the reasons of the court that the DOTC had the authority to issue orders like DOTC 2007-28 are "very absurd" because the order that would result in a monopoly because the Constitution mandates the state to ensure there is competition in insurance.

Gonzalo said the motion for reconsideration would prevent concerned authorities from implementing the plan that would turn GSIS into the sole insurer of CTPL insurance.

Should Pira fail to get a favorable ruling from the Makati Regional Trial Court, he said, the group would take the case to the Supreme Court.

Winston Garcia, GSIS president and general manager, said last week that his office was already preparing for the implementation of Department Order 2007-28. He said the decision of the court last week to dismiss the case filed by Pira indicated that the GSIS could immediately implement the order. With reports from

Senate urged to compel Pagcor to settle taxes

By Michelle V. Ramos

IN A RECAPITULATION TO THE Senate, the Department of Finance wants Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. to settle its outstanding tax obligations—including those with the state-auditor claimed to be exempt.

The Senate committee on ways and means under Sen. Ramon Revilla Jr. has been set inquire into Pagcor's tax status after complaints have been raised more than the government has been losing huge potential revenue that could otherwise have been obtained from the profitable corporation.

Pagcor, on the other hand, has insisted that it is not required to pay VAT and income tax because its charter states that it is owned only by the franchisee tax.

Tymbers has asked the DOF to study Pagcor's tax liabilities and come up with recommendations.

A finance official said that, after studying the issue, the DOF "concluded on the side of the Bureau of Internal Revenue, its attached agency. The official cannot be named because he is not a designated DOF spokesperson.

The official said the DOF would work closely with the Senate committee on ways and means in the filing of cases to enable its tax obligations.

The BIR claimed that, although Pagcor previously enjoyed certain tax exemptions, the state-owned firm has been covered by the VAT since the EVAT (Expanded VAT) law was passed in 1996, and by the income tax since the EVAT (Reformed VAT) law took effect in 2005.

BIR Deputy Commissioner Nelson Aspe said that under the EVAT law, utility firms, such as those engaged in the business of distributing gas, water and electricity, are the only ones exempt by the franchise tax. Pagcor pays the 5 percent franchise tax levied on gross receipts.

Because Pagcor is not covered under Aspe said, there is no basis for subject to VAT.

Aspe also said that because of the EVAT law, Pagcor was removed from the list of those exempted from payment of income tax.

Prior to the passage of the EVAT law in November 2005, Pagcor enjoyed income tax exemption under the National Internal Revenue Code.

But Pagcor has not been settling its alleged tax liabilities with the BIR.

Aspe said that the BIR has been engaged in a court battle over the issue. Aspe said both the BIR and Pagcor recently filed with the Supreme Court urgent motions for the resolution of the case.

"Though [Pagcor] may have a different opinion because of things, the BIR stands by its position that Pagcor should pay VAT and income tax," Aspe said in a phone interview over the weekend.

Subnotebooks for sub-20K

By Mario M. Ramirez
Contributor

WONDERFUL, EYE-CATCHY, THIN-AND-LIGHT laptops have been flooding the market these days.

So far, there are about six to eight subnotebooks/UMPCs (Ultra-mobile PCs), worth taking note, but let us concentrate on the subnotebooks that may be had for just under P20,000—the Asus eeePC; the Neo Sphere X1, aka the Classmate PC; the Atomic UMPC; Blue technology's Deep Blue H1, and the Forevo CloudBook.

All the devices have 7-inch, 800x480-resolution LCD displays—good enough if you have good eyes. But they can strain your eyes and give you a headache on prolonged viewing. So, think twice about watching the DVDs on these devices—you would be better off using a portable DVD player.

In the display category, what comes out ahead is the Asrono U800C because of its touch screen.

In terms of low power consumption, which would amount to longer battery life, then Via would emerge the winner.

As for extensibility and speed, the Intel processor has the edge...even though the processor is underclocked at 600MHz and a wee bit more power hungry.

In comparing the devices' RAM (random access memory), without taking into account expandability, Asrono UMPC and Deep Blue H1 come out ahead with their 1 GB of RAM.

However, if you were to bump up the RAM, Asrono would fall short because you would have to replace the Box in order to increase the RAM to 2 GB.

This would be a painless activity if you were using an Asus eeePC. You only have to replace the 512 MB RAM with a 2GB DDR2 667 RAM...reboot...and ... voila, you're ready to party.

But with all things considered, Deep Blue H1 hits the right RAM note.

In the storage department, the SSD busts heads with the HD.

But of the Asus eeePC's speed may be attributed to its SSD (solid state disk). It's fast, really fast. And that shows in boot up items. However, 4 GB is just not enough storage space. A full Windows Media Center installation would leave you with barely 500 MB of free space. All the other subnotebooks are HD. So, the winner in this category is Deep Blue H1 because of its 40-GB HD. (Asrono has released a 60 GB version for 2GB.)

On webcams, Neo Sphere X1 fools in its specs. The rest are all even. The difference lies in placement. Asus has its webcam on top of its screen. While Asrono and CloudBook have theirs installed on the right of their respective screens.

Deep Blue H1

FOREX CloudBook

ASTONS UMPC

ASUS eeePC

Ultra Short Throw LCD Projector
CP-A100

- Ultra Short Throw Technology
- Shadow Free Presentation
- Multiple Usage on Various Environment
- Made in Japan

HITACHI
Inspire the Next

Pick the PC that suits you

By Raquel P Gomez

ASPIRE Gemstone Blue

ASPIRE X1300

HARDCORE GAMERS AND DIEhard addicts, heavy multimedia and graphics users, laptop and ultramobile PC lovers, and the plain PC home users may be able to find the device that will suit their needs from the current crop of computing products. Acer has recently launched.

In our survey, the new PC products with noticeable technological and design improvements were officially unveiled by the top Intenex PC and notebook vendor. One particular product, a luxurious gem bright orange metal monster called "Predator," stole the limelight.

Geared to the gamers' market, the Aspire Predator G7750 has to purchase: desktop PC packed with Intel Core 2 Quad processor (2.66 GHz), 8 MB L2 cache, 1066 MHz FSB) on an NVIDIA nForce 780i SLI chipset with DualBus technology (a chipset offers two Ethernet ports for Internet connection).

ASPIRE One (sapphire blue)

The Predator, whose appearance is almost similar to the popular Transformer robot Optimus Prime—because of the grille-like front that comes out of a cover or hatch—is also powered with 4 GB DDR2 RAM and NVIDIA GeForce 9800 GTX (512 MB) dedicated graphics card.

It has an easy-swap hard drive cage (that houses a 640 GB SATA II hard drive), eSATA ports for further expansion, two optical drives (a super multi-optical drive and Blu-Ray ROM drive), an optimized Dolby Home Theater System, and a 24-inch LCD monitor. This mean monster, which marks Acer's entry into the gaming PC niche, retails at P130,000.

Acer also officially entered the netbook bandwagon with its latest-entrant notebook called Aspire One. In smaller frame or sapphire blue colors, the lightweight and streamlined Aspire One already sprouts on the Intel Atom processor on top of a Mobile Intel 945 GSE chipset, has a 10.1-inch LCD screen, full-size keyboard, an 8 GB solid state disc (expandable with an SD card slot), 1 GB DDR2 memory, a built-in Wi-Fi, and 3000k pixel camera.

It is already preinstalled with Linpus Linux Lite operating system and retails at only P18,800—much cheaper than their EeePC 900 and MSI Mini-Note PC. Acer will soon sell units with a Windows operating system.

The 13.3-inch multimedia laptop Aspire Gemstone Blue has new additions to Acer's popular Instantcon series: it is an eye-catching device with the dancing neon blue lights coming out of the "CineDash media console"—an independent touch sensitive control panel beside the keyboard that users can use to manipulate the multimedia features of the laptop.

ASPIRE One

This cool laptop that runs on Intel Genuine Dual Mobile Processor (2.4GHz), 3 MB L2 cache and 800 MHz FSB) is a dream gadget for movie lovers, even graphics and video producers because of the following features: a 16-inch full HD (1920 x 1200p) resolution display, a Dolby Home Theater surround sound with two built-in stereo speakers and GlenSonic boosts, a True 5.1 channel surround output as well as a Blu-Ray ROM player that also plays HD DVDs.

ASPIRE Predator G7750

To be able to handle all that demanding home and multimedia demands, the Gemstone Blue (P80,000) has NVIDIA GeForce 9500M GS graphics accelerator (which is capable of up to 128SP, NVIDIA CoolBit and a 320 GB hard disk plus 2 GB DDR2 memory).

Other new Acer family additions include the multimedia-ready Aspire M3641 (running on Windows Vista Home Premium and priced at P58,900) and the Aspire M5641 (running on Intel Core 2 Duo processor and priced at P85,000) that targets home users, students and young urban professionals.

Both desktops feature easy-to-access power buttons, ports (USBs) and a "media desk" for desktop-like smaller gadgets (MP3 player) that are located on top of the CPU case. There's also a concealed designated storage space for cables to make the desktop neat-looking.

The most affordable PC among the new batch is the low-power consuming and small footprint design desktop Aspire X1220 that runs on AMD Athlon dual core processor.

ASPIRE M5641

Priced only at P18,900 (excluding the LCD monitor), the Aspire X1300 already features an NVIDIA Hybrid SLI onboard graphics, optimized Dolby Home Theater audio enhancements and 5.1 channel surround sound support, an HDMI port, a multimedia card reader, and Windows Vista Home Basic operating system.

eBay launches developer program in Asia

THE WORLD'S LEADING ONline marketplace, eBay, has recently launched its Developer Program in Southeast Asia.

The Southeast Asia Developer Program follows the recent unveiling of Project Fetch, a plan to integrate third-party applications directly into the world's largest e-commerce site.

The price of the solution, available later this year, will make third-party applications and features for eBay's Selling Manager feature directly accessible to eBay business sellers.

Selling Manager is eBay's single most popular tool for business, with more than 700,000 subscribers. Project Fetch is an extension of the existing opportunities for developers to monetize their offerings.

To kick off the Southeast Asia Developer Program, eBay is organizing a competition to encourage local developers in Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand to experiment and innovate by building e-commerce applications for eBay and PayPal.

Chosen concepts will be supported with free development support and the eventual commercialization will walk away with attractive cash prizes. The top three prizes being S$120,000, US$80,000 and S$5,000 respectively. Other cash prizes for special merit projects will also be available.

2 tech firms pass Greenpeace environment scale

By Rica T. Chirinades

ONLY TWO OUT OF 18 ELECTRONICS companies, namely Sony and Sony Ericsson, scored above five points out of ten in environment watchdog Greenpeace expanded and toughened criteria in the eighth edition of its "Guide to Greener Electronics."

The newly added energy criteria, the group said, require companies to show their political support for global mandatory cuts in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Greenpeace said the new criteria measures the commitment of technology companies to reduce their GHG emissions from their own operations. More companies, the survey noted, take a limited view of this by only focusing on the energy efficiency of their products rather than including the production process.

"The information and communication technology (ICT) sector currently accounts for 2 percent of global GHG emissions, equal to the aviation industry," said Iryna Rozumna, Greenpeace Southeast Asia issues campaigner. "As one of the most innovative and fastest growing industries, Greenpeace expects the sector to take leadership in tackling climate change by reducing both their direct and indirect climate carbon footprint."

Apart from introducing the new criteria, Greenpeace said it also tightened the requirements on electronic waste (e-waste) and toxic chemicals.

Overall, Sony Ericsson stood out as the first company to score almost top marks on all of the chemicals criteria, although it needs to improve on recycling. Greenpeace noted that all new Sony Ericsson models are PVC-free. The company has also banned antimony, beryllium, and phthalates from models launched starting January 2008.

The companies surveyed generally scored well on energy efficiency, Greenpeace said. The best performers were Sony Ericsson and Apple, which their models either meeting or exceeding Energy Star requirements.

Gaming company Nintendo is still at the bottom of the list, as in the previous survey.

The list was first launched in August 2006 as a challenge to electronics companies to make their products more environment friendly, from production to disposal.

The companies, and how they fared, are listed below:

1. Sony Ericsson (1.1 out of 10 possible points)—Top marks on toxic chemical phaseout, best poor on recycling.

2. Sony (3.7)—Products free of the worst toxic chemicals.

3. Nokia (4.8)—Got one penalty point for poor take-back practice in India. Marks for use of renewable energy.

4. Samsung (4.9)—Good on chemicals and waste criteria, but not on energy issues.

5. Dell (4.5)—Scored well on toxic chemicals and e-waste, but lots on energy issues.

6. Toshiba (4.1)—Did well on toxic chemicals, but poorly on e-waste and energy.

7. Acer (3.9)—Good commitment to phase out toxic chemicals.

8. Panasonic (4.3)....Several products free of toxic chemicals and good energy efficiency, but poor on e-waste.

9. Motorola (4.2)—Average scores for toxic chemicals, e-waste and energy issues.

10. HP (4.3)....Good grades on recycling.

11. Apple (4.1)—Mixed products free of the worst toxic chemicals. Low scores on energy.

12. Sharp (3.9)—Good on toxic chemicals and energy efficiency, but very poor on recycling.

13. Lenovo (3.9)—Some points for toxic chemical commitment and good on product energy efficiency.

14. Philips (3.7)—Top score on energy issues, but poor score on take-back policy and practices.

15. Fujitsu Siemens (2.7)—Some products free of the worst toxic chemicals, but poor on e-waste and energy issues.

16. LG (3.3)—Some points on toxic chemicals and e-waste, but zero on energy.

17. Microsoft (2.1)—Some commitments on toxic chemical phase-out, but poor on e-waste and energy issues.

18. Nintendo (0.8)—Some improvement on toxic chemicals and commitment to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

Across Asia, open source technology reported to be gaining ground

RECEPTION TOWARD OPEN SOURCE technology has been very positive across Asia, according to a top executive of a Philippine-based global software and engineering services firm.

Consumer perceptions and preference for open source products, such as the Apache Web Server, Linux Operating System, JUE Apache Tomcat, and Eclipse IDE, have been on an upswing, said Winston Damasille, firm executive chair.

The regional trend follows accelerated deployment of open source technology worldwide, with almost half of all websites in the world running on Apache Web Server, Damasille said during the recent Philippine Open Source Summit in Cebu.

"As a result of the efforts of open source advocates to increase understanding of open source technology and its benefits, we project that open source will become a pervasive feature of business, if not in everyday life, over the next two to three years," Damasille said.

In the Asia-Pacific region, adoption rates of open source technology have rapidly increased over the past decade, he said. More and more governments across Asia, as well as small- and medium-size enterprises, are turning to these solutions. The governments of South Korea, New Zealand and China rely on open source software for major national computerization projects.

In the Philippines, the Commission on Information and Communications Technology, the agency in charge of the promotion, development, and regulation of integrated and strategic ICT systems, has been pushing for the adoption of open source operating systems and desktop productivity applications as part of its vision of an electronically enabled "ePhilippines."

Also, the United Nations Development Program established the International Open Source Network (IOSN) in 2003 to promote the adoption of Free/Open Source Software (FOSS) open standards and content in the Asia-Pacific region.

In 2006, the IOSN released an Status Data Gap, study that showed a 44-percent increase in the number of open source developers in the Asia-Pacific region from 2003 to 2006. The report said nearly 75 percent of all software developers in the region have used open source modules in their applications.

Regional businesses are also starting to opt for open source over licensed software to cut costs. Examples are the Hong Kong-based steel conglomerate Sin Sheng Cheng Holdings Ltd. and the Industrial Development Bank of India, which have delivered purchasing licensed software in favor of open source products.

Sin Sheng Cheng Holdings Ltd. started migrating its server software to Linux in 2002, saving as much as $100,000 in IT costs. IDBI was reported to have decreased its IT budget by 70 percent after deploying open source software.

"Open source brings the software game to a totally different level," said Damasille. "Who would have thought that relatively small start-up companies could compete head-to-head with the big boys who have long established themselves in the software industry?"

Subnotebooks ...

From page B9

So for the $200, the winner hands down is Asus eeePC, having three 2.0 ports. The two only have two.

All the devices have three to four hours of battery life. So, it's a tie. But, Asus is a user bit ahead because you can get a 70GB (with) (extended) battery for your eeePC.

On operating systems, you may need to spend some time studying Xandros, Linux and go, find out how to make them work. But with Vista (tighter, there is no need to train. In Windows XP matter is a bit value to itself. Although you may have to buy a Microsoft's Office suite.

As for the extras, it all depends on the user. Asus's touchscreen is a $600 value-added feature. But if you were to engage in a lot of Powerpoint presentations, Targus CloudBook with its (40) port and Asus' eeePC D sub video output port would come in handy. Over all, the winner here is because UMPC due to its USB LCD projector.

In terms of price, Asus edges out the others. It announced a price reduction for its eeePC 701, following the launch of its 900/904 .

Design: If you like color, then Asus would be the device for you. But I like the space in between the screen and the battery — as in the case with CloudBook and Asus' (HPC—only because you can dig some fingers in from under, hold it just so, and you can work on your notebook with ease.

In the end, what it all boils down to is cost for money. And with that in mind, I may have to place my bet on Asus eeePC.

My close second is Asus's (HPC because of its touchscreen and HD. And if you have the means to expand your budget, then get the MSI because it's IE.

(The author is a (medical doctor-by-day and technical (techie-by-night.)

MSI device lets you ride with the wind

THIS FOUR MOBILE LIFE INTO A breeze with MSI Wind Notebook U100XP.

The Wind Notebook, now available locally, boasts of a lightweight design and a number of exclusive functions that give the user freedom to do "whatever, whenever, wherever."

The MSI Wind Notebook U100XP has a 10-inch-wide LED screen. Its 1024x600 resolution displays a full view of Web pages while browsing, giving you the freedom when exploring the Internet.

The notebook is embedded with the LED power saving backlight technology. Lowers use of power translates to a longer operating time.

The home is approximately 26 centimeters in length and 18 centimeters in width. It is only 19 to 33.5 mm thick. Total weight, including the battery, is around 1 kilogram.

The device has the energy saving Intel Atom as its processor. The Atom, with its excellent energy saving ability, is designed for mobile devices. It only uses up 2.5 watts, much less than the 35 watts of the Intel Core 2 Duo.

Also, the Wind Notebook is equipped with the 2.5-inch standard hard drive 80GB. Its full-sized keyboard allows users to work comfortably.

The notebook has a high resolution webcam, high performance two-channel stereo speakers, and microphone, all fitted perfectly within the frameworth design.

Wireless connection includes the 802.11b/g wireless all-region internet connection and Bluetooth communication interface.

MSI Wind Notebook U100XP offers a complete entertainment interface. Featuring a 4-in-1 card reader (SD, MMC, MS and MS Pro) for the easy uploading of digital files in addition to its three USB 2.0 port and an optional external DVD-burner.

Estimated price for an MSI Wind Notebook U100XP is P25,999. For more information, visit http://www.msi.com.ph.

MSI has introduced five series of notebook computers to suit varying consumers' tastes: the G-Series (gaming), A-Series (multimedia), P-Series (professional), S-Series (convertible), V-Series (value), and U-Series (ultraportable and mobile).

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KOREAN AIR

Five steps to fix a bad credit record

By Ms. Sales Dupleo
Inquirer

PERSONAL FINANCE

THE WAY THE BANKING SYSTEM is wired at the moment, there seems to be no real and lasting happy ending to a bad credit history. Bankers admit that Filipinos who have marred credit records can rest assured another will have to live with the hit on their name in banks' databases for virtually forever.

Marlena (not her real name) is a self-acclaimed bad creditor who has turned a new leaf. She thinks mistakes happen all the time, and not being able to make up for them is rather than that police are going through the roof, a responsible used credit card was under all the difference between eating and starving between parties. It at least being able to buy a child's book or art supplies for school.

"I admit I was a bad borrower. I was young and I made mistakes. But instead of helping us, this bank charged us with very high interest. After that, my mom got sick and I needed to help the family, so the charges and the principal grew and grew," she says.

Marlena eventually found a way to pay off her debt, thank to painful shock. It took a long time, yet even after her successful "graduation," she was denied story since she applied for a new credit card, and she couldn't open a checking account. She didn't try getting a car loan or personal loan, anymore.

"I stopped trying after a while. I don't know if there's anything I can do to change the past," Marlena says.

Korea, on the other hand, says her problems started on a foreign city when her friend asked to ride on her credit card. "I was a student, but I paid at least the minimum. When my friend couldn't pay her purchases charged to my card, the very high interest kicked in and in one time my bill went up to P200,000. I eventually paid off everything—the paid but very late—the damage was done. I was already on the negative list," Korea says.

As of now, banks rely on the Bankers Association of the Philippines's (BAP) so-called negative list to identify bad borrowers. Once you're on the credit, you're there forever. Individual banks have their own list, but the contents of these are closely guarded.

There can all change if a bill on creating a centralized credit information bureau authored by Sen. Edgardo Angara and Sen. Jose Edgardo Angara is passed, signed into law and fully implemented. The idea is to have central listing similar to the Experian, TransUnion and Equifax services in the US, where banks can see a reliable, common database so that they can lend better, regulate low collateral and charge lower interest. In the US, consumers can also access their own credit records for a fee, and check for errors.

Until the bill scares into law and is implemented, bankers say there is little those who have a hit on their name can do but fix their financial habits.

Repairing mistakes of the past

1. Admit your mistake.
2. Pay your debts.
3. Save regularly.
4. Ask for a written seal of good housekeeping.
5. Live within your means.

"Filipinos need to be aware that without putting an effort to maintain a good credit history, they will not be able to borrow from legitimate lending institutions and could find themselves open to unscrupulous lenders," says Jaime Montemayor, senior vice

PHOTO, B2-3

JJ BORROMEO, Dusit vice president and head of the Borromeo Group of Companies

Times are down but health is up

By Kenneth M. del Rosario

THE INCREASING HEALTH consciousness of Filipinos has led many to invest in products that they believe contribute to their well-being.

As a result, companies like Dusit, a global firm that sells health lifestyle products, are expanding despite the tough times.

"There has been a big improvement in the awareness of living a healthy lifestyle because people are now more educated," says JJ Borromeo, Dusit vice president and head of the Borromeo Group of Companies (BGC). "It helps that people's disposable income tend to increase as well."

Borromeo recently launched Dusit's 12th outlet in the Philippines in Rockwell Power Place Mall, Makati City. This is the country's second flagship store, the first of which opened in Edsa Shangri-La Plaza two months ago.

The first Dusit outlet was opened at the Podium Mall five years ago.

"I think people now realize that investing in their health is always better than potentially spending money in the hospital if you get sick," Borromeo says. He believes on the usefulness of the store's opening. "Like they say, prevention is better than cure."

It is this prevention from disease and stress-related problems that Dusit promotes, along with keeping a healthy and balanced lifestyle.

The newly opened 185-square meter store takes cues from its name and focuses on health and wellness, fitness, hygiene and nutrition.

The health and wellness section carries the fully automated, state-of-the-art massage chairs and reflexology machines. It is only 15 to 30 minutes a day, Dusit's massage chairs promises users a more relaxed mind and body.

This is achieved by the massage chairs' capability to mimic the human touch, as if one is being massaged by a masseuse in a spa.

"The difference with having Osim's massage chairs, however, is you can have a massage anytime and anywhere you want," he says.

The store's fitness section, on the other hand, is where one will find cycling machines and stairs and video-equipped treadmills, among others.

There is the relief, a machine that copies surfing on the beach with its wave-action system that enhances the sense of balance. Also available is the elliptic, a new item that promises to burn calories, firm waistlines and develop buttocks by simply sitting on it.

Osim's'Her, meanwhile, is a designer massage chair that uses advanced optical sensors to detect the acupressure points in the body for a therapeutic massage.

Designed with a exclusive leather finish and equipped with an auto-clear off system, people as young as 13 years old

TURN TO B3-1

More competitive China from the Sichuan rubbles

THE SICHUAN EARTHQUAKE disaster is considered to be one of the worst tragedies in this area's modern times. Some preliminary news tells it as China's 9/11.

The earthquake at intensity 8 followed by a series of strong aftershocks was equivalent to the explosive force of 300 atomic bombs. Most of the damage was in the mountainous areas of this southwestern province which is the center of natural gas deposits and pork industry of the country. More than 70,000 people were killed or missing. Around five million families were left homeless, with property damages estimated at $20 billion.

Although the hardest-hit areas were on the mountain villages, many infrastructure such as roads, buildings, power plants, schools, railways were leveled down many miles away from the epicenter.

Yet in the Philippines are us familiar with such tragedies but not with the massive destruction that the quake brought about.

Good handling

As of this writing, the government is trying to prevent the possibility of another disaster, this time from possible flooding from lakes that were dammed by landslides. This threat is made more serious with the continuing heavy rainfall that followed the tremors which built up the water levels there. The homes of another million people are at risk and the residents have been relocated to higher grounds. At the same time, the Chinese engineers will try to drain the lakes by tunneling canals piece-by-piece for water to drain safely... a Herculean task.

The Chinese government has handled the emergency very well especially when contrasted with the bumbling response of the generals in Myanmar to their flooding catastrophe in their southern provinces. The Party leadership is reportedly focused on the welfare of the survivors. In determining the root causes of the excessive destruction and its future reforms to prevent repetitions of similar tragedies. With stiff upper lips, they are leading the drive to bring out the best from their people while hosting generous international humanitarian assistance in a prompt manner.

President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao immediately demonstrated their collective concerns, moved massive manpower, materials and other resources to the affected areas as fast as possible. Then rain on the scene in less than 48 hours after tragedy struck, leading orders to troops and headmasters and giving soothing words to those who lose their loved ones.

But the biggest heroes are the Chinese people themselves who demonstrated their concern in many small gestures which could not but impress people from even more advanced countries.

Poor construction quality

There are growing protests that a major cause of so many fatalities is the poor quality of construction of infrastructures such as school buildings and other weak complexes. We Filipinos are only too familiar with the "impure" type of public works. Of their fatalities of 70,000, some 30,000 were children attending classes who were buried instantly by the collapsing buildings. The lists of these children who were totally heartbreaking since the Chinese families are obliged to follow the one-child policy of government.

To host an only child due to perceived corruption of their officials has led the parents to rare displays of angry protests demanding accountability from their LGU officials who approved the shoddy construction.

Communist Party local officials have been enraging the public of emergency assistance and the lifting of the one-child limit for parents who lost their kid.

Some China experts believe that the Politburo leaders will consider this as an opportunity to rein in the excesses of many local governments. It is well known that while the public have very high regards for the central government, they have little confidence on their local officials due to perceived poor governance and corruption at that level. This has been cited as a reason for the slow development of the inner regions, the widening gap between the haves and have-nots and the flight to the cities.

The Chinese system follows a decentralized pattern of governance due to the huge size of the country but the prerogative of the Communist Party cannot prevail.

That's the five-year national objective is to balance the development of the various regions so that the growth will not come only from the coastal areas. The central economic machinery are moving their limits of capacity and would need to expand either by moving from their central provinces (to the West) or by outsourcing them abroad or by a combination of both. Offshoring is already taking place in a significant way. The Go West option will be a massive one unless there is a systematic development of rural networks and other infrastructure to link the various LGUs to become a coherent whole. This can only take effect with massive LGU officials working hand in glove with the central government.

Improvements

Indeed, there are those who feel that the improvements of the landlocked regions are tremendous being dwarfed by rosy earnings LGU officials such as what is being presented now in Sichuan.

There were the cases of the Party Secretaries in Shanghai and in Shandong who were indicted due to their refusal to stop the corruption in their provinces. We are also reminded that the head of their food and drug safety office was chopped off for being corrupt and allowing a toxic paint to be used for toy exports in 2006. The general impression is that the central leadership needs to crack the whip more to get the LGUs to bow more closely to the Party's moral and economic program.

Former President Jiang Zemin's term was marked with rapid growth in their economy by becoming the behemoth in global exports. He pursued a foreign policy rife of a friend and benefactor in Asia, African and most European countries. He had been pro-American in most issues except when it involved their distinct interests in Taiwan and North Korea, and in certain countries in the Middle East.

As a result, China was elevated to the World Trade Organization and was widely welcomed in regional groups such as Asean, Apec and the Asia-plus-3 bloc.

This opened the doors to their enablement of key resources such as oil, coals, metals and chemicals, and the opening of markets to Chinese manufactured goods.

We remember Jiang and his Track 2 initiative, Mindanao Way II, where they made a near visit to the Philippines in 1997. They joined us in singing medleys as we were cruising around Manila Bay. The two were both petroleum engineers. (Note the elite Shanghai Gang) who got along quite well with President Fidel V. Ramos who is a civil engineer from Illinois University. Following their visit, the Philippine-China trade was doubled to $3 billion per annum in the following year.

Despite their friendly ways, Jiang and Wu were known for their stern approach in pursuing their objectives. It was Madame Wu, as vice-chair of the Politburo, who was able to control the urban Chinese after the social unrest in response of local officials. Jiang, on the other hand, ran short the heftiest democratizations of ousted youths for more western-type rights in some major cities especially Beijing.

Wide gap

I'm more realist than the wide gap between the inner regions with a per capita income of $1000 and the coastal provinces with a per capita income of $7000 cannot be allowed to continue militant. Interesting to me) cannot like the one taking place in Sichuan. Consequently, he is expected to start soon the "pantilanan" of the Party in local levels. The success of the Politburo five-year program depends on such reforms on the LGU officials in the townships, districts, provinces, etc.

President Hu is expected to make his mark with this political reform to achieve greater transparency and stronger competitiveness in the poorer regions. China experts predict that the Sichuan economy which contributes only 4 percent to the national GDP will improve significantly in the next few years. It will be made the model for the Politburo's "Go West" reinvestments campaigns for resolutions by the other poor provinces. A more competitive China is expected to rise from the Sichuan rubbles.

(This article reflects the personal opinion of the author and does not reflect the official stand of the Management Association of the Philippines. The author is co-host of the National Competitiveness Council and Trustee of Institute of Corporate Directors. Feedback at cesar@globelines.com.ph. For previous articles, please visit <map.org.ph>.)

Five steps to fix a bad credit record

From page B1-1

president at HSBC and head of the personal financial services division.

If you are one of those who find yourself in the deep end or you have a loved one who does, here are a few things that you can do to fix the past.

1. Admit your mistake. From a business standpoint, banks will make more money from you if you recover from that low point.

They don't like advertising that they restructure debt because it's prone to abuse, but banks admit that they give lighter payment terms if the customer has a "genuine desire to settle"... even if the period is protracted, says Ibanez. An official from another bank says you might even get favorable points if you call your bank and don't wait for them to call you. Nothing from creditors has never done anybody any good.

2. Pay your debts. If you are given another chance to pay your arrears, make good on your commitments. The whole game plan is to rebuild your credit score, and that won't do with another wave of credit card bingeing, Ibanez says over the years, Filipinos have been more conscious of their credit history. "Even during difficult times, Filipinos usually try to comply with their penalties and would even seek bank's assistance for flexible payment options," he says.

3. Save regularly—in the same bank. As they say Rome wasn't built in a day. Slowly building your credit score will take some time, but there's no secret. The bank will trust more than their own record of your savings account, lock away money on a regular basis—say P500 or P1,000 a month—into your bank account. The regularity, more than the amount, will show goodwill. Some banks will even give you a pre-approved credit card that can rebuild your record faster if the savings balance goes up high enough.

4. Ask for a written seal of good housekeeping. A bond dealer and a sworn audit from a bank officer is well and good, but a written seal of good housekeeping is better. Keep one in your file and remind the bank to send this file to the BAP Banco says Philippine banks are required to notify the BSP when debts are settled. While the negative record will not be deleted, now you have something to show when trying to apply for financial products.

5. Live within your means. With a written record under your wing, you may check in once you learn to say and spend a little. You didn't bear those months of self-control in vain your record again. Florentino T. Gonzalez III, vice president for credit and business analytics at Bank of the Philippine Islands recommends living within your means and borrowing only for the right reasons.

"Filipino borrowers' concern over their credit history stems depending on the person's social background, family background, personal habits and other traits, virtue or a lack of it, among others," says Gonzalez.

Rich people are not necessarily good payers, he says. "They] wouldn't care so much about their credit worthiness, unlike perhaps some of the downwardlies. But the poor farmer, who is very particular about upholding his credit standing, may turn out to be credit worthy," Gonzalez adds.

Life and money always go together, and credit records go awry when when relations skips also do. "Family troubles, impending breakup of marriage may indicate greater risk in compromise their credit history," the banker says.

It's hard to fight a bad credit record that you can't see or touch. But for now at least, optimism is not the only answer for people who want to change history. Good habits and measurement can soften even serious breakers.

BDO

We served up a bucket of solutions for KFC's Cash Management System.

KFC had a lot on its plate, but BDO Business Banking took charge of their collections and disbursements needs.

We find ways

'Made in China' proves false economy for some

CHICHEN ITZA DEL ORIENTE, Germany—Irene Bauer nudges a bundle of material onto a spike and gently turns it twice—right over left, then a second, to reveal a Steiff teddy bear head.

She has been hand-making Steiff toys for 16 years in Giengen, a German town, where the maker of collectible teddy bears—some recent bundles of cheerfully red cuteness—was founded over 125 years ago.

Chasing lower costs, Steiff outsourced around a fifth of its production to China in 2003 but has now decided to come back because of concerns about quality and swift turnover.

Steiff is one of a small number of German firms leaving China, despite its cheaper workforce and a burgeoning consumer population. With fuel at record highs, some cite mounting transport costs.

Production of Steiff toys, which include a distinctive long-limbed bear with a melancholy gaze, will come back to Germany and other countries in line up by the end of 2009.

"If the symmetry is off and if it looks like it's been run over by a car, it's not what we want. People don't pay for that," Steiff managing director Maren Percher told Reuters.

Gradening of around 15 jaws and such an average price of 40 to 70 euros ($63-$110), the toys take up to a year to learn to make and around 60 percent of the work is done by hand.

Bar with twisted legs, bald patches and open seams, a "unfortunate" number of the Steiff toys made in China had to be rejected, Percher said, because high staff turnover in a fast-growing economy means workers do not stay long enough to be trained.

"We don't really fit in here there," he said, pointing out that Steiff's typical outlay of around 500 toys were also too small to reap good cost savings in factories more accustomed to mass production.

Germany has been the world's largest exporter of goods since 2003, but China has been snapping at its heels for the top spot...even though China now manufacturing was cast in a poor light last year after 320 toymaker Mattel had to recall over 20 million Chinese-made toys, costing it around $110 million.

The world's leading toymaker, which produces over half its products in China, has since vowed to tighten checks on its Chinese partners and suspend up-quality checks.

But for smaller companies, such quality control is difficult to implement, said Harald Kayser, head of the China Business Group at mid-tiers Hessen-technologie Company (PwC).

"If you don't have people from your own head office in China then it is very difficult to manage the process," he said.

A PwC study shows that companies can save up to 50 percent making their goods in China instead of Germany, but that firms often underestimate logistics costs.

Around a third of companies actually incurred losses by moving production east, the study showed.

German trampoline maker Bellicon, with an annual turnover of 2.5 million euros, also says it regretted moving some production to China and has now brought it home.

"We had to do so much extra follow-up work in Germany [such as dealing with customer returns, that when we calculated it we had barely saved anything," said manager Heiko Schmidt.

He said the company had frequently visited its Chinese partner in try to build up a good relationship. Once during a six-month gap between visits, however, almost the entire workforce at the factory had changed.

It was no surprise the quality ruined so much. New people came, the quality dropped, then they improved their skills and left," he said, adding that the Chinese-made trampoline parts did not reach high enough endurance standards. Reuters

A few franchising opportunities in RP

From page B2-4

Tronix Feed Digital Printing Machine to entrepreneurs who want to put up mini-digital printing business.

To make business more convenient, the kiosk-type printing business package with Tronix Feed machine was introduced, thus the Feed Print Xpress.

"They don't have to think what to do and where to put up, as the design and dimensions that suits to commercial centers require for tenant applicants. We are going to buy it sets all for you," adds Rilica.

Since "convenience" is the very advantage of this setup, investors don't need capital to submit a line of locations. It may be malls or trade areas where they wanted to put up the business. Upon settlement of requited fees or payment, franchisees will provide the driver the business proposal, letter of intent and the design and layout of the kiosk. The client will present his application with the mall or establishment with the documents provided by Imperial Tronix. As soon as the application is approved and settlement of fees are completed and contract signed, Imperial Tronix will set up the kiosk and install the Feed machine at the client's location.

Tronix Feed digital printing machine is designed to handle any printing volume and can print images from camera photos and digital media. For only P1,40 material cost per print, entrepreneurs can sell these prints at a price relatively cheaper than those in the mall but today. The machine's software records sales and prints made every day, making accounting and inventory check easier for the owner.

"Given a very good location and sound management practices, profitability is commercial centers and large foot traffic areas, investing in this kind of business can give you a payback period of less than a year. It also depends on the number of photos prints the shop is making a day," says Rilica.

Since this is not a franchise, Imperial-tronix will not collect or charge the client with royalties or percentages in the monthly income. Management decision-making is entirely left to the owner. Imperial-tronix will assist the owner with product and technical support and marketing programs.

For queries e-mail marketing@imperialtronix.com.ph or visit www.imperialtronix.com.

Congo Grille's recipe for franchising

Restaurant franchising presents opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs. Apart from an established business concept and a brand name recognition and built-in marketing support, franchisees also share the restaurant's and reputation in the industry.

Congo Grille, a family grill restaurant, has opened its franchise business to would-be restaurateurs.

It offers solid training programs and technical and manpower support and unique take on family dining.

Since its inception in 1999, the eatery-inspired grill-themed has been known for its fun and casual atmosphere as envisioned by the Syzia brothers. In its first year alone, the restaurant recorded average customer traffic of more than 15,000—figures per month. It opened its biggest branch at the Westgate Center in Filinvest, Alabang.

In contrast to other grill restaurants, all menu items are prepared daily inside the store's kitchen facility.

Congo Grille's vision is to become a "Global Filipino Grill" restaurant that provides unparalleled food quality and services run by passionate and driven professionals.

"When approving a franchisee, we believe that is also many a long-term familial relationship. So our franchise system is successfully survive and prosper, there must be unity. We believe that the success of each franchise would greatly depend on our concerted efforts," says managing partner Ivannoh Syzia.

Congo Grille currently has nine outlets located in Ortigas Center, Westgate Alabang, SM City Fairview, SM City San Lazaro, SM City Sta. Rosa, SM City Clark, SM Mall of Asia, SM City Pampanga and in Ayala's Trinoma.

For inquiries e-mail franchise@congogrille.com or visit www.congogrille.com.

Times are down but health is up

From page B2-1

cies are the message chain.

Though the affiliate carries a P800,000 tag price, consumers do not seem to mind as it is one of Oxim's best-selling products in the country.

The store's hygiene section, on the other hand, is devoted to household items such as water purifiers, air purifiers and personal cleaners.

The nutrition portion of the store showcases electronic weighing scales, blood pressure and body fat measures and the world-renowned vitamins and supplements brand, GNC Live Well.

It is this American brand that inspired the SGC to get involved with Oxim.

Back in 1991, SGC became the master franchisee of GNC in the country.

Ten years later, the group brought in Oxim through a master franchisee agreement as it believed that it complements GNC's advocacy of a healthy lifestyle.

A master franchise gives the franchisee the right to sub-franchise the Oxim brand in the country. The firm intends to do this soon, he says.

Today Oxim operates in more than 1,100 outlets in over 380 cities in 28 countries in Asia, Australia, Africa, the Middle East, United Kingdom and North America.

Other Oxim branches in the country are in Ilocandia High Street in Makati; SM Megamall in Ortigas; Greenhills Shopping Center in Manila; Alabang Town Center Expressway in Muntinlupa; Ayala's Makati; SM Cebu and SM Mall of Asia.

While the Oxim products are for everybody who wants "something different, something fun, and something new," Bautista observes that physically active people are the most frequent customers.

"These are people who believe in the therapeutic powers of massages and the athletes who know best when it comes to muscle recovery," he says.

He adds that men's natural attraction to buying the latest in technology has made them the main buyers of the massage chairs, he says.

Four managers, on the other hand, are bought mostly by women.

Though there are other companies offering similar items, the owners does not believe that the matter is answered with health products.

Besides, he is confident of the Oxim products' quality, which he says is the brand's best asset.

"We also provide after sales service and a competitive warranty that is unlike any of the other brands," said Bautista, who is also the president of Sinland Inc., a company that sells suits, suit and shirt-boosting apparel.

The affable Bautista agrees that the Filipinos are more conscious of their health today, he says there is still a big chunk of the population who need to be educated on the benefits of having a healthy body.

That's why Oxim started getting in campuses to talk health with students.

It invites professional sports players to share their own experiences in keeping a clean and active lifestyle.

Among the celebrities who have participated in the activity are basketball players Willie Miller and Kerby Raymundo, along with the team captain of the national soccer team, Ali Burraueen, JV's younger brother.

Burraueen is also no longer waiting for customers to come to the Oxim stores.

This time, the group is doing the rounds of companies such as call centers, hotels, gyms, and even schools, to encourage them to incorporate Oxim products in their respective employee lounges and fitness rooms.

"We also conduct road shows in different companies to showcase the Oxim products for them to experience its benefits firsthand," says Diamonito Blanco, the company's business development officer.

Bautista says business is "doing good," but the group is not sitting on its laurels and is on an aggressive expansion mode.

There are plans to put up more outlets in Cebu and eventually from into the Davao market to service the needs of the health-conscious People in the provinces.

Website: www.inquirer.net/business
E-mail: business@inquirer.com.ph

BUSINESS Monday

A few franchising opportunities in RP

MAKING THE SMALL AND medium scale enterprises, it is the franchisee that have the better chance of succeeding at a rate of 86 percent.

That was according to Department of Trade and Industry Domestic Cainta Magbaya during the recent Philippine International Franchise Conference and Expo.

Initial results of a study by the University of Asian and the Pacific and the Philippine Franchise Association estimate the franchising sector account for 5 percent of the country's total gross domestic product for the years 2005 to 2007, recording around P107 billion to the local economy.

Below are some franchising opportunities in the Philippines today:

TRADE Secretary Peter Favila (2nd from right) and Malaysian Minister for Entrepreneur and Cooperative Development Datuk Noh bin Omar lead in opening the Franchise Expo 2008 at the SMX Convention Center Friday. With Favila and Omar are (from left) Franchise 2008 chair Jose Magnayo Jr., Philippine Franchise Association vice chair Manuel Siguenza and chair Bing S. Limjoco, Malaysian deputy secretary of the ministry of cooperative development Abd bin Ibrahim and PFA chair emeritus Sumit Lim.

Monterey equips franchisees

Monterey Foods Corporation (MFC) recently finished running the first year's second batch of participants in its franchisee program for Monterey Meatshop.

Monterey General Manager (GM) Doc Leo Olivar shared key ingredients for growing businesses during the monthlong program. He affirmed the integral role of customer service in keeping customers coming back to the shops. He stressed, "Customers are buying not just meat products they are also buying an experience in buying meat."

Thirty-nine franchisees and franchise personnel were trained on critical success factors in franchise operations such as excellent customer service, cash management and conditioner training and customer care.

Monterey Foods Corporation began as a cattle farm in Isabela in 1969. The business grew and was eventually acquired in 1980 by San Miguel Corporation. With its "farm to market" concept, the Filipino consumer is assured of quality meats for every meal. It pioneered the selling of value-added meat products like fast delivery service while providing complementary food products alongside its beef, pork, lamb and chicken meats.

Monterey Meatshop franchising began in 1998. From only four meatshops, it has grown to over 150 outlets. Today, Monterey's franchised meatshops are located nationwide.

Monterey franchisees receive support services such as in-store design, Monterey signage, training of crew, operation support and marketing.

For queries log on to www.monterey.com.ph.

Ink refilling offer franchise

There was a time when the idea of cartridge ink refilling was frowned upon because of crude system employed by ink refillers.

Some 12 million cartridges are used in annually around the world, and only some 3 percent were refilled because of fear of damaging printers. They say generic ink, manually use syringes and disregard the need to weigh and change chips, that causing more harm than good to computer printers.

While most users resisted to cut costs on cartridges and continues to preserving the environment, they had no choice but to stay with original equipment because of the inefficiency of refilling systems.

But with the advent of modern technology, one to surprise the growing need to cut costs and environmental wastes, consumers are beginning to give ink refilling a second look. This is evident in the increasing number of ink refilling companies in the country today.

"There is a big market for the refilling and remanufacturing industry in the country," says Rudolyn Decena-Streefield, master franchisee of Cartridge World in the Philippines, one of the leading players in the market.

Here on its second year, the Australian franchise has brought refilling of cartridges and toners to a higher level using new state-of-the-art earth-friendly technology.

It refills cartridges quickly and remanufacturers most types of toner cartridges, for about half the price of new products.

With more than 1,000 outlets in 32 territories worldwide, Cartridge World is the first franchise to provide a full range of services to meet the printing needs of both consumers and business users.

"We are a new franchise system, and every month, our store has increased sales on an average of 40 percent. The breakeven point is achievable in six months," she says.

It also sells remanufactured products and carries major cartridges under the Cartridge World brand which is compatible with printers.

She says that their entry in the market poses a big challenge in educating customers on good quality and the need to recycle to preserve the environment. Customers should also be assured of printer warranties and be provided with satisfactory after sales service.

"We do not operate as a kiosk because of the delicate machines, monitor and processes we use. Our refurbished units were trained in Australia to provide consumers top-of-the-line technology and service," Streefield says.

She says the franchise package runs in about P1.5 million which includes a two-week training for two staff in Australia, initial ink refills and accessories, refilling machine and equipment, initial inventory and marketing collaterals. A store should have at least a 60-square meter floor area located strategically in a business area with which can provide a steady stream of customers.

Cartridge World has three outlets in Makati City and branches in Pasig City, Muntinlupa and Laguna.

For more information, log on to www.cartridgeworld.com.ph or visit Booth 332 at the Franchise Expo 2008 at the SMX Convention Center in Pasay City from July 11 to 13.

Set up your own digital printing business

With the "convenience" of entrepreneurs in mind, Instacrocodile, Inc. has come up with the "Pinoy Print Xpress Shakap" — for those who want to invest in the profitable digital photo printing business.

"The Pinoy Print Xpress Shakap is business made easier and more convenient especially to first-time entrepreneurs. So little, so expensive, no hidden charges. It's as good as buying the Tronix Pinoy Digital Photo Printing Machine plus the convenience of having a ready-to-set-up kiosk complete with amenities," says Jonas Africa, product sales officer of Instacrocodile.

For several years, Instacrocodile, Inc. has been offering the

AFTM/ BLL

BUSINESS Monday

ERNST & YOUNG GLOBAL FRAUD SURVEY

RP companies more conscious of corruption

Story on Page B1-2

Law enforcers, Microsoft gear up vs cybercrime

Gov't gains access hotline to respond to requests for security emergency assistance

DEMONSTRATING ITS COMMITMENT TO promoting secure computing, Microsoft Philippines organized a workshop to raise awareness and best practices on computer forensic investigation. Attended by more than 70 security officials from various government agencies, the workshop is part of the company's Security Cooperation Program (SCP), a global initiative from Microsoft, which is helping participating governments address computer security incidents effectively.

According to Jeff Paine, regional government engagement manager for Microsoft Asia Pacific, security is always one of the top concerns for governments and to be addressed now that the Internet is becoming more and more accessible to the public. "Cybercrime is growing faster than any other crime in the world and it is important for the government security officers to have an awareness of the tools that exist to fight it. With SCP, Microsoft seeks to help governments respond more efficiently and effectively to computer security incidents and help protect public safety."

Paine was in the country recently to help conduct the workshop on forensic investigation and share best practices with government security officials. "Spammers, hackers and other criminals are becoming increasingly sophisticated and as a company, we are making an effort to help law enforcement track down these offenders and contain these illegal activities," Paine added.

In early 2007, the Philippine Government signed into the SCP through the National Computer Center (NCC). Under the program, Microsoft works closely with government agencies, in partnership with the NCC, to share information that can be used to improve computer incident response processes and citizen outreach.

Angelo Timoteo Diaz de Rivera, director general of the NCC said, "The government recognizes the value of technology in enabling it to deliver service urgently to its citizens. As we rely more on technology, we have also turned our attention to the requirements for security."

According to Diaz de Rivera, the partnership provides an opportunity for full and structured communication between the government and Microsoft on IT infrastructure security. This entails making available to all partners the information needed to respond adequately to computer security incidents.

"It is important for IT leads to be well-versed and trained in computer security. The SCP will enable us to receive localized materials, such as information security bulletins ahead of time, which will help in mapping out resources and preparing advisories. Also included in the agreement is the provision of security incident response and recovery solutions."

The SCP also facilitates the distribution of information on released and upcoming security updates, which enables the government to immediately prepare alerts and notices.

Government security officials will also have the opportunity to interact with Microsoft security officials familiar with the needs of the government at the company's headquarters in Redmond, Washington. Other collaborative measures include consumer education and outreach activities.

In the Philippines, Microsoft has actively engaged various local and international groups to address online security issues.

In July 2007, Microsoft, in partnership with the PNP Anti-Cybercrime Group and the International Center for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC), also held a first-of-its-kind international training program seeking to address the continuing issue of child exploitation through the Internet.

Founded in 1975, Microsoft (Nasdaq: "MSFT") is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realize their full potential.

GE to aid Olympic athletes

BEIJING, CHINA—GE HEALTHCARE, the $17 billion health-care business of General Electric Co. (GE), is working with medical leaders in the Olympic Movement to advance the use of innovative medical imaging technologies to provide insight into athlete health, as well as benefits for the general public. The company will supply a broad array of medical technologies, including magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), ultrasound and electrocardiogram (ECG) to the Olympic Village General Hospital. In addition, three National Olympic Committees, including China, the United States and Spain, and two Sports Federations will use GE Healthcare's compact ultrasound technology.

In line with GE Healthcare's "Early Health" vision and its commitment to open medicine, these technologies will assess the cardiovascular and musculoskeletal health of Olympic athletes before, during and after the Beijing Games.

"At GE Healthcare, where it comes to health and sport, we believe in saying 'the sooner the better,'" said Joe Hogan, GE Healthcare president and CEO. "Athletes push their bodies to the limit every day which deserves and requires vigilant health monitoring. The simplicity and speed offered by our innovative medical imaging technology helps clinicians capture an accurate diagnosis when it's most crucial, early on. This helps answer the question of whether an athlete can stay in competition and could mean the difference between winning the gold and an unnecessary trip to the emergency room."

GE Healthcare will equip the Olympic Village General Hospital, which will offer comprehensive healthcare for all Olympic athletes and officials.

RP companies more conscious of corruption

A GLOBAL SURVEY ON BUSINESS FRAUD shows that the awareness level of Philippine companies has increased with regard to the practice of graft and corruption in the course of business. A majority of Philippine respondents have considered bribery or corruption-related risks before acquiring a new business in the last two years.

Other survey findings show that a significant number of Philippine companies have experienced being asked for a bribe to secure or win business, and 11 percent have lost business as a result of their competitor paying a bribe. To begin addressing these issues, over half of the respondents have come up with procedures when dealing with government officials (in any country) to mitigate the risk of corrupt business practices.

SGV & Co. Risk Advisory Services Partner Leonardo J. Marquez Jr. says, "The survey results indicate the importance local entities put on issues of corruption in general, and the need for these issues to be addressed. The survey also tells us that corruption is a global business issue and that nothing is a universal concept."

More stringent controls over high-risk payments, increased training and awareness and compliance-focused internal audits are the top three deterrents of corrupt practices according to the respondents. Confidence in the internal audit process remains high, with close to three-fourths of survey respondents agreeing that internal audits provide an opportunity for full and structured communication between the government and Microsoft on IT infrastructure security. This entails making available to all partners the information needed to respond adequately to computer security incidents.

"It is important for IT leads to be well-versed and trained in computer security. The SCP will enable us to receive localized materials, such as information security bulletins ahead of time, which will help in mapping out resources and preparing advisories. Also included in the agreement is the provision of security incident response and recovery solutions."

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THE MORE than 50-year-old bakery was set up by seven Chinese friends.

Tale of Dagupan's two oldest bakeries

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuentes
Inquirer Northern Luzon

DAGUPAN CITY—AT A TIME when modern bakeshops and pastry shop chains are sprouting in every major city or town, two pioneers in the bakery industry in this Pangasinan City continue to entice a sizable clientele of loyal patrons.

A visit to the Sanitary Bakery and Grocery and the New Kwong Tay Bakery and Sari-Sari Store evokes a feeling that the one "little corner bakeries" were plushed out of modern time and place.

But it is through their use of the old reliable pugon (brick oven) and secret family recipes that these establishments endure the changing times.

Partnership

The Sanitary Bakery was established in 1947, two years after World War II, by seven Chinese friends who came from China to escape their country's oppressive regime.

The friends—Sioco Sone, Lee Sian, Ung (Domingo) Lee, Lee Lah, Ito Cheng, Liong Shin and Pete Tek—started different ventures but soon pooled their resources and established the Sanitary Bakery and Grocery.

The partnership broke in 1962 and Sone bought the shares of his six partners.

Sone adopted the Filipino name Isidro when he married Hermelita, a woman from Cavite, Tagalog but. Their union have 12 children.

The third child, Conchita Sone Guevara here as Marang Cruz, 62, is now managing the bakery's daily operations.

"I was the only unmarried child so my father entrusted the bakery's operations to me [and I have been running it] since 1969," Conchita says.

When her father and his friends decided to dissolve the partnership, some of them did not want her father to be left with the bakery.

But Shin Tek, who had the biggest share among the partners, prevailed upon the others to allow Sone to manage the bakery.

Sacrifice

"There were difficult times," says Conchita, who had to stop schooling for a year so her father could save enough money to buy the bakery.

"I often cried then, imagine seeing my classmates in high school already going to college and there was I, helping out in the bakery. But came I realize the value of my sacrifice," she says.

From 1960 to 1968, her eldest brother, Sonio, managed the bakery until it closed over its 1968 debt misunderstanding since then, just as her father, who died in 2007 at the age of 98, had wished.

The July 1990 earthquake destroyed the bakery's original pugon, forcing Sone to abandon the bakery to reclaim family property in the city.

But the new pugon was not efficient so Sone returned to the original bakery on MC Hernandez Street.

"Sonio's slow then (They say she is a lucky planet)," Conchita says, Sone father instructed his children not to change the recipes as it might be difficult to have another one like it.

Conchita says Sone father had no formal training in baking or store management but in Canton, China, Sone known as Dangsiboyed, where his seven friends, cooking and sewing were part of the children's evening to school.

Sone father had a looking book that a British gave him and he changed some ingredients to suit the Filipino taste for bread and pastries.

Conchita says the photocopied the book and gave copies to all her siblings.

Three generations

Sanitary Bakery has three generations of chief bakers—an immigrant from China, his son and, now, his grandson. But while the bakers came up with delicious products, Conchita, a commerce graduate, perceived to learn to bake.

"I asked my father to teach me how to bake," she says.

But her father refused, stating she should learn in her own. By experimenting and relying on her instincts, Conchita was able to create the formula for the perfect bread, pastries, cookies and biscuits.

It is still the original products—pan de sal... down to Sunday's bestseller.

"We do not change the recipe but we can't help but decrease [because of the rise in the cost of ingredients] the size," Conchita says.

She likes to tell the bakery "Secret Heroes" because the secret was created by the seven Chinese friends and taken her 13th sibling, Antonio, was born in 1962, her father acquired the bakery.

Antonio also owns into the bakery business and established the Chocolate Kastonio and Pinasa Pinapa with his wife, Earnelia.

The Sone matriarch, Alejandra, is still involved in the family business. She mans the cash register daily.

Kwong Tay

Kwong Tay Bakery is the oldest bakery in Dagupan, having been established before World War II.

Salvacio Wong, 81, the grandson of the original Chinese owners, says he and his eight siblings would not recall the name of their grandparents who returned to China and died there.

His sister, Honorata, 70, says their father, Wong Peng Heng, went to China and married a Chinese girl, Ing Hit, but returned to the Philippines to continue the bakery business.

Some of the recipes come from an old recipe book from a British with changes in the ingredients

She and her sister, Rosario, take care of the bakery's daily operations.

Jedrosio recalls that the Wong family stayed in Manila's City during the war and returned to Dagupan after the fighting to restore the bakery's operations.

The bakery reopened in a new location with the name Hua Kwong Tay Bakery and Sari Sari Store.

The bakery chains out white bread and pan de sal that have become part of Dagupan's daily breakfast fare for years.

Modern bakeshops have upscaled but loyal customers always return to Kwong Tay for its sense of baked products.

Florentina says the recipe is tightly guarded among the Wong siblings.

"It is really a secret formula," she says.

"We just bake enough bread that we can sell by the day," she says.

The bakery's pugon was destroyed during the 1990 earthquake, but has been repaired times.

A resident says she would always drop by the bakery every afternoon before the goes home from work. She says her mother loves Kwong Tay's bread and would not cease it for products sold in other bakeshops in the city.

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NISSAN

CARABELLES: Bejasco Reyes and her beautifully packed seven cookie products.

Makeover boosts Marinduque's top 'pasalubong'

By Gerald Dave F. Quevedo
Inquirer Southern Luzon

STA. CRUZ, MARINDUQUE—Previously packed in plastics with photocopied paper labels, Marinduque's iconic, customarily known as arrowroot cookies, a must-try souvenir to attention grabbing and colorful boxes and in cans that could be bought off the shelves of libreo Mindoro malls.

It took almost five decades before the iconic, the province's top pasalubong, was able to undergo a makeover in terms of packaging and labelling.

Gemelita "Mita" Bejasco-Reyes, manager of Bejasco's Bakery, which baked the iconic cookie, has also been able to develop other cookie variants—including those that are sugar-free, sugar-free with pinipig, organic, cinnamon, high-fiber, and unsalted arrowroot—as—ther picky and health conscious asian consumers will have more cookie products to choose from.

Bejasco-Reyes credits the transformation to the Department of Science and Technology's (DOST) Small Enterprises Technology Upgrading Program and the Department of Trade and Industry's (DTI) Design Center.

The products' new package and label were worked on jointly by the Provincial Science and Technology Center of Marinduque, the DTI and the DOST-Industrial Technology Development Institute's Packaging Research and Development Center.

Bejasco-Reyes recalls that in 1996, DTI provincial officials insisted on improving the packaging of her products so they could compete in the market.

Their products' "new look," however, materialized only in 2003 after a long and thorough study.

Homemade recipe

Her aunt, Encarnacion Bejasco, developed the original recipe of the iconic cookies, according to Bejasco-Reyes.

Later, Reinelda would bake the cookies as gifts to Mita's parents—Crisanto and Belen Bejasco.

The couple improved on the recipe which has been the specialty of the Bejasco's Bakery that they established in 1993.

The original Bejasco's Bakery was owned by Timoteo Castillo who opened it in 1946. When Reyes-Bejasco assumed management of the bakery in 1986, she discovered that running the business was not easy as it seemed.

The production of iconic cookies was inconsistent because of unsteady sauce flour supply.

"The availability of raw material (arrow flour) was only once a year," says Bejasco-Reyes.

Since farmers were switching to other crops because it took the arrowroots 10 months to grow or only once a year every harvest cycle.

Further, traditional processing of fresh arrowroot into flour was consumed so much time and energy.

A sack of arrow flour, which contained about 25 kilos, could take a day to produce. The laborious process made arrow flour very expensive.

To solve the problem, Bejasco-Reyes sought the help of the DOST, DTI and the Department of Agriculture (DA) as fund mayo on how to improve the arrow-to-flour processing.

Improvements along this line cut time and labor costs that resulted in low and affordable prices and ensured production stability.

For its part, the DA helped Bejasco-Reyes set up the Marinduque Arrowroot Industry Council to be able to organize the province's arrowroot farmers.

Experts from the DA trained the farmers on the appropriate method of planting and harvesting of arrowroot crops.

"When I sought the DA assistance, it was not just the profit that I was on my mind but how I could also be of help to the farmers," remarks Bejasco-Reyes.

As soon as the farmers were organized and trained, there was a boom in arrowroot production.

Meanwhile, the DOST, through its provincial office and its Metal Industry Research and Development Center (MIRDC), helped Bejasco-Reyes acquire the right equipment that could efficiently process the root crop and make it cheaper.

MIRDC tied up with Rollil, a foreign machinery firm, and did a study on the processes involved.

The partnership then developed a centrifuge and related devices for washing, straining, extracting and drying of the root crop.

As a result of this effort, the DOST was able to put up the very first starch processing plant in the country in the town of Sta. Cruz.

With the new machine, the years processing time went down significantly.

Washing now takes only two-to-three minutes while straining is done in five minutes.

The machine's extractor separates the juice and the pulp to automatically cut drying time.

From the centrifuge, the moist arrowroot extract is taken out and dried in a cabinet dryer for 8 to 10 hours. Patients can now dry their starches even when it is raining.

Product development

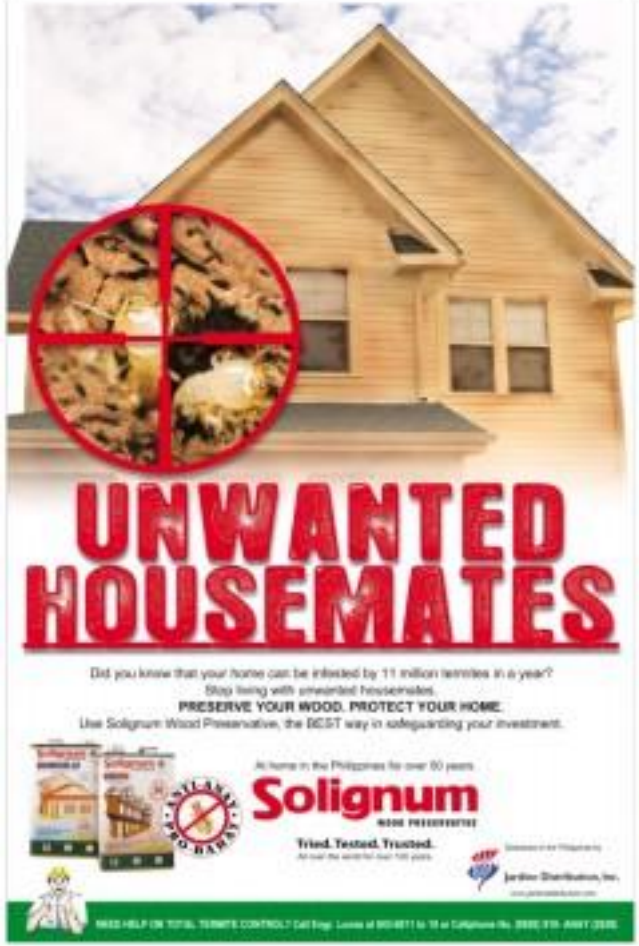
At present, Bejasco-Reyes is still working hand-in-hand with the concerned government agencies to develop byproducts from the arrowroot plant.

"We are looking forward to a zero-waste technology in the future," she says.

"We are currently developing new products out of the arrowroot leaves and pulp, instead of just being made in livestock feeds, to further help our farmers and the province as well," she adds.

Bejasco-Reyes has one vision in mind.

"What I want to happen is for our product to be known locally and in other countries as well and that if we say arrowroot cookies, it's a product from Marinduque," she says with a smile.



MARINDUQUE'S arrowroot cookies made by Bejasco's Bakery.

BUSINESS Monday

How Baguio copes with oil price hikes

From using charcoal stoves to used kitchen utensils Story on Page B4-2

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IT'S the underground trade which is keeping the local economy alive, even that even "poor man's" food like dried fish has been marked up by P30 because of the escalating oil prices.

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How Baguio copes with oil price hikes

Text and photos by BV Baginia
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—POLICE have been reporting an increase in crimes since July when the oil price crunch started hitting the pockets of most people.

But the reported increase in illegal street peddlers and overloaded public utility vehicles are treated by law enforcers as manifestations of how people in Baguio cope with the commanding crisis.

Dried fish, an urban poor staple, has become expensive.

Evangeline Dita, who sells fish products in the market, says they have been compelled to increase prices by P20 per kilo.

"It make ends meet, Baguio's urban poor and lower middle class have ventured into underground trade. Their efforts are helping keep Baguio's economic consumption alive.

Queues in kerosene dealers are now longer than lines to dealers that sell liquefied petroleum gas (LPG).

But even longer lines lead to dealers of charcoal as fuel newly purchased charcoal stoves. Lisa Estanislal, a 45-year-old peddler, says 10 morsels, which sell for P120 each, are sold every day.

Commercial user charcoal makers have also stepped up production. A sack of charcoal now sells here for P220.

Sidewalks in villages are now lined with drying charcoal bricks, which are later sold at the public market.

The Baguio mangyang (bargain goods) section and sidewalk vendors have dropped prices to as low as P5 for T-shirts to drum up sales.

The shiny (secondhand goods) business has also diversified. Instead of just imported secondhand clothes and accessories, mangyang have now sell brand-new items as well and secondhand cooking equipment for the bargain-conscious housewives.

LIZA Ganacial shows off her new lucky soldiers, clay stoves.

QUAKES now lead to charcoal and kerosene dealers because some households have abandoned LPG use even due to the high costs.

CHEAP THRILLS. Baguio households cope with the commodity crunch by picking through secondhand goods sold in Baguio's mangyang (bargain items) centers.

British restos feel mid-market pinch

LONDON—IN A SLOWDOWN, economists say to expect the squeeze in the market's middle. For Britain's recently fast-growing restaurants, it's starting with lunch.

Chef Pascal Aussignac, who has been serving Londoners at the chic Club Gascon for almost a decade, says rising inflation, heating and food prices are pinching his customers' midday purses.

"People are eating more at their desk, they've cut down their budget," he said. "Only senior people are heading to a restaurant ... We feel the credit crunch at lunchtime."

Chefs in UK's 24 billion-pound ($47.81-billion) industry such as Michel Roux, owner of London's La Gavroche restaurant, have seen the price of a fillet of beef rise to 28 pounds, from 19 in January, Roux told Reuters.

"I am taking a bitter pill," Roux said on the sidelines of a food festival, Taste London, where elegantly dressed women in wide-brimmed hats sipped champagne and sampled oysters.

But analysts say his Mayfair restaurant—which charges an average of 80 pounds per head—and other up-market sites where customers don't need to look at their pay checks ahead of a decision to dine are not on the front line.

It is the mid-market tier, charging between 25 and 35 pounds per head and mainly set in previously vibrant areas, where the prospect of tougher times and rising prices are prompting ordinary people to eat more at home.

"It's a sector that's going to have a really tough time," said Peter Ballbach, a partner at business Roma Dog, which specializes in debt restructurings and insolvencies.

"The first bit of exposure that people see are the personal expenses, like restaurants."

With talk mounting of Britain heading in recession, fast-food restaurant owners and consumers about weakening new business and shrinking disposable incomes, The Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply recently said.

UK firms' cash flow is at its weakest in 15 years, car registrations are down, industrial production has fallen sharply and consumer confidence has dropped to the lowest level since the index that tracks them was created in May 2004, according to British retail bank Barclays. Half of all people think the present situation is "bad," it said in its most recent report.

Home delivery is the fastest growing segment of the "eating out" market, according to Mintel, the market research firm.

Domino's Pizza reported strong trading in the first 16 weeks of 2008 with like-for-like sales up 13.3 percent.

Analyst Ed Aspinwall said: "People are two words at play" and Mark Bromley leisure analyst at Blue Dot Stockbrokers. "One is the couch potato/at home mentality that we've all getting into a little bit and the other is the fact that I obviously or home delivery) is cheaper. It would be difficult to disaggregate which was which."

Vultures' feast

The model for rapid expansion of restaurants in British London during recent years has often been to make the most of their high cash flow in fund growth through (screwed) funds, by investors in distressed ventures, some known as vulture funds, have a keen eye on recurring insolvency in leisure.

"Another six months and we're going to start seeing casualties," said Tom Aikens, one of the most prominent chefs in London, who has three restaurants serving high-end to mid-the-bar customers.

The number of hospitality leisure and restaurant companies filing for administration in Britain rose to 70 in the first quarter from 60 over the same period in 2007, according to accountancy firm Deloitte. Spirit Gold Holdings Plc and The Copper Pot Ltd., which serves Indian food, are among the companies that failed this year, Deloitte said.

"Before, the sky was the limit, now the pocket is the limit," said Nicolas Bordat, an independent runner based in West London. "People are more careful, they don't take the best of the best as before, they pick the next one after."

According to him, 30-pound lunches of Bordat chateaubriand have been replaced by cheaper holiday while one have and

Restaurant chains have dropped plans to list their shares on the stock market, including Tragus, owner of Café Rouge, Bella Italia and Strada chains, and controlled by US private equity firm Blackstone.

Pizzaroma, owned by Lion Capital, and Gaucho Grill, a chain renowned for its Argentine beef, also scrapped plans for an initial public offering.

Listed restaurant companies have seen their shares slide as investors fear for the future. *Reuters*

Stretch the peso to meet the family's needs

IT IS NOT BY CHOICE BUT BY FORCE OF necessity that Filipino households now have to resort to inferior quality of products. Not so with Lamoiyan Corp.'s Super Toothpaste which is able to price its products affordably and yet maintain being within world quality standards for products of its kind.

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The Philippine Dental Association, through its seal of approval, acknowledges Super's quality.

Aside from the regular variants, Lamoiyan develops specialty products under the Super brand to try and serve the needs of various markets.

Lamoiyan recently introduced the Herbal Complete with guava and green tea extracts known to help in whitening. And unlike its competitors, Super goes beyond the sheer mentioned benefits of the common toothpaste because of its herbal component. Another innovation is Super Night Mint. While it works similarly hard to cleansing the mouth, Super Night Mint helps freshens the breath while one is asleep.

Then there's Sixteen Clean. And as suggested by the name, it extremely cleans and prevents teeth from cavities and leaves the mouth with intense freshness. While 2-in-1 provides the deep-cleaning effect of toothpaste and the breath freshening coolness of mouthwash in one step. And for sensitive teeth, Dentitect Advance is the first Filipino toothpaste that is clinically proven to address both sensitive teeth and gums.

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BUSINESS Monday

Steep steel prices cut into cutlery makers' pockets

Text and photos by Ephraim Aguilar
Inquirer Southern Luzon

TABACO CITY—CUTLERY MAKERS IN this city, who provide blood to an industry built by traditions, are bleeding profits due to skyrocketing prices of primary raw materials such common charcoal and hard steel.

For nearly a century now, blacksmiths in Barangay Cobo have been famed their craft to gain a reputation as the "best cutlery producers in the Bicol region and, probably in the country."

From its early days in 1939, cutlery making is still very much alive in Barangay Cobo today.

One could hear the pounding and sharpening of steel in workshops adjacent to houses, where seasoned blacksmiths work at such speed and precision to be able to mass produce their products.

Emily Bonecete, 48, of Barangay Cobo has been in the cutlery business for 23 years now. She says her parents were her main inspiration in the business venture.

"I grew up seeing my father make scissors. It was our main livelihood. Through cutlery-making, he was able to send us to school," says Bonecete.

Mass-married, Bonecete also put up her own cutlery shop. She has four workers who make scissors and grass cutters for her.

However determined in pursue this line of business, Bonecete says cutlery-making is being challenged by the country's down economy.

She says the prices of raw materials have tremendously increased.

Steep prices

Hard steel from junk shops used to be P30 per kilogram during the 1990s but now, it ranges from P55 to P60 per kilo.

Common charcoal used to be P64 per sack but now it is worth P250 per sack.

Bonecete says gone are the glory days of their cutlery business.

"We could not just increase our prices because our buyers would run away," says Bonecete.

She adds if they could only develop direct market links and even export, their industry might prosper again.

However, Bonecete says, they have no capital to be able to expand their production level to export.

She says cutlery-makers would now commonly rely on the "byadores," a middleman who sells their products to other provinces in Southern Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

Russell Nieves, trade and industry development specialist of the Department of Trade and Industry in Albay, says cutlery makers should be able to tap the market directly.

Merchants vs producers

"Prices of cutlery are controlled by merchants. Cash and material advances are given by wholesalers to suppliers, thus, the latter are tied up and could not demand for higher prices," Nieves says.

He adds that the wholesalers usually get a margin of between 30 and 50 percent, leaving manufacturers a small profit of 5 to 10 percent.

Nieves is the coordinator for the Tabaco cutlery under OTOP, One Town, One Product (Otop) program. Cutlery is Tabaco City's town product and is celebrated annually through the city's Tabak Festival.

"Tabak" is a native word meaning "knife," from which the city's name was derived.

The Cobo blacksmiths or the Samahang Manggagawang Pantap sa Tabaco Inc. (Samapatci) is composed of 31 producers of hand-crafted cutlery.

Nieves says the association's monthly product capacity is 7,370 pairs of scissors, 4,000 bolos, 50 samurais, 10,260 knives, 100 pieces grass cutters, and 500 razors.

He says the industry association employs at least 144 workers and the asset size of every cutlery shop ranges from P50,000 to P500,000.

Nieves says the association produces the finest handcrafted cutlery in Bicol, but local producers need to learn product and market development.

He says there is a need for new-style designs for scabbards, a generic trademark or brand, fiber glass-based handles, and a common production center where products could be standardized and branded.

The city government has given P1,00,000 for raw materials and room (has P400,000 for the construction of a common workshop facility. The association also plans to put up its own display center.

Alejandro Cedeo, president of Samapatci Inc. and owner of ABC cutlery, says one thing that keeps Tabaco's prized industry alive is quality.

"Our local cutlery is better than imported ones, which are cheaper but are not durable," says Cedeo, who recounts cutlery-making was already a running tradition when he was born. The 48-year-old man believes he shall never see its demise.

SAMURAI swords cost from P350 to P400.

A SEASONED cutlery worker sands and polishes scissor handles over without the use of protective gears. Since cutlery-making involves the use of flames, it could be very hot in workshops that are only roofed with sawdust or tin.

THE BOLO, routinely called "Tabak," is sold at P140 (small), P220 (medium), and P330 (large).

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Intramuros *treasures* seek safe haven

TABERNACLE

'I want to be sure that the collection Laya so carefully put together is still intact and all accounted for,' says IA administrator Bambi Harper

By Constantino C. Tejero

A FEW MONTHS AFTER Anna Maria "Bambi" Harper assumed office as the Intramuros Administration in Palacio del Gobernador at Aduana and Gen. Luna St. in Intramuros, Manila, a city councilor came a-visiting.

While looking around at the objects on walls, tanks and cloisters, the councilor asked her: "Magkano ito kapag ay ano (this)?"

Stunned at least. Proving a snake, Harper answered with an embarrassed "No." That just goes

WEAVING of the Coronation of the Virgin

INTRAMUROS CE

ON THE Rose, the Little Lord Jesus lays down His sweet head.

INTRAMUROS Administration chief Anna Maria Harper (second to the right)

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VISUAL ARTS

"SELF-PORTRAIT as a Multi-Monkey in Search of the Proverbial Banana in a Land Far, Far Away"

D'Bayan at Crucible

Igan D'Bayan's third solo exhibit, "Studies in Unnatural Historties," opens July 15, 6 p.m., in Crucible Gallery at A.F. Sta Magsanoc 8, Mandaluyong. Show deals with the world and Hinoyoan's ethic way Filipinos approach history, science and religion—a pre-opening "grad look at a post-colonial country. The show is about Philippine history as a quirky

(Continued on Page 2)

Group exhibit at West

A group exhibit, "60"x 40" (Part 2)," featuring the new works by Lawrence Borrente, Melvin Calo, Ito Bondoc de la Cruz, Dennis Carmelino, Lolita Manes, Rodel Tapaya and Eric Zacarelli is on view on 18 July 22 to West Gallery at 4/L Bldg. A, 300 Kingsmill, Mandaluyong, Call 634-1284.

"THE SECRET" by Eric Zacarelli

Villanueva at Tiendesitas

Lutelle "Chito" Villanueva exhibits his oil-on-wood portraiture "Old Man" and "Old Woman," July 20-27, Pinoy Biz Fair 2008 in Tiendesitas Village, Brgy. Ayala-an and C-5, Pasig. Also on display are silkscreened of National Artist Guillermo Tolentino. The exhibit is a preview of Villanueva's first major solo exhibit set in November in Shanghai La Plaza. Villanueva's other art pieces, genre paintings, landscape and still-life paintings are on display in Pinta Galleria at 214 Sapphire Bldg., 7 ESt Ave. ext., Caloocan. Call 6966224, 09155946511 or 09055479195.

Galicano portrait demo

Florante Galicano portrait artist, will give a lecture-demo in his art on July 19, 2 p.m., at Metropolitan Museum of Manila in Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Complex, Roxas Blvd., Manila, Manila. The lecture-demo "The Art of Galicano" is an auxiliary activity of the exhibit "Pinoys: Portraits, Prestige, Posterity," ongoing until Aug. 30. Entrance fee is P100, which covers a visit to the museum's galleries. Discounted rates are given to groups of 25 and above. Educators who bring in a group will get Senior Scholastic's one-year free admission to the lecture. Call 02308 13 or 5211517, e-mail info@metromuseum.ph.

"SIBSIB (Ang Kinahinguhing Kombinasyon)," by Romulo Galicano

'Figura' at Art Asia

Festival painters Ronilo Alunan, Felix Cabacang, Camille de la Rosa, Jhen-Imee Ne-Puerro, and Oliey Tiponan featured in "Figura," until July 22, in Art Asia Gallery at 4/L, 388 Megamall, Mandaluyong. The works show mastery of facial color and realistic rendition. Call 6345045.

"BINUKOG Festival Queen," by Rustin Alunan

"MILK Hills," by Bernard Vitiz

Young artists at Nimrods

Nimrods designers at Vila Silanger, Sta. Cruz, Laguna open three solo exhibits on July 21. "Meeting People is Easy," by Renato "Jojo" Baja Jr.; "Grocery" by Rolando "Ron" Mojares; and "Portraiture" by Bernard A. Vitiz. A three-solo exhibit, "Table Backdrop," is also featured. Call 040-5599617, 0916-7123868 or 0908-4081329.

Sesa art workshops

Fernando B. Sesa hosts drawing and painting workshops at Philippine Medical Women's Association, V. Luna Rd. and Malakas St., Bocon City (Retiring's), 20 Bonanza St. and Zamora St., Barangay Pasok, QC (Sunday's, J. Vargas Museum, University of the Philippines, Diliman, QC (Monday's, and Tuesday's). Instructor Sy Supe invited artist Kimby Rogers, Shannie Ann, BC Workshops are from 9-11:30 a.m. Call 2152186 or 0918-9578889.

AMBETH R. Ocampo with National Artist Jun Film Eddie Romero

Ambeth Ocampo to deliver lecture on Juan Luna

HISTORIAN AMBETH R. Ocampo will deliver a lecture on Juan Luna—man, artist and patriot—in Ayala Museum, Greenbelt Park, Makati, on July 19, 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Ocampo is guest curator of the exhibit "Luna: Artwork Paintings from the Bank of the Philippine Islands Collection." Most of the works are unfinished or rough sketches, these being steps in painting that reveal Luna's creative process.

Some paintings have never been exhibited in public. Ocampo's lecture is open free to the public, with just museum admission.

OCAMPO

Still life comes to life

By Dra Flamenbaum
Contributor

Tessie Dulduluan returns to the art scene with fine pastels

TERESITA SARMIENTO Dulduluan, whose last exhibit was held more than a decade ago, returns to the scene with an exhibit of new works starting July 16 in the SM Art Center of SM Megamall.

To cut the ceremonial ribbon is National Artist Napoleon V. Abueva.

All the paintings on display are still life of fresh flowers and old artifacts, most of them were lent by art collectors.

An artist exhibit will be held in SM Manila bookstore, composed of figure paintings and sketches in pastel and landscapes in watercolor.

Dulduluan one of the finest pastel painters of still life in the Philippines. Some 40 of her paintings in one setting is to be reminded that discipline, hard work, deliberation and inspiration are still the chief virtues of the art.

Her line is simple. Flowers and objects on a table. What draws the viewer to her work is not that her subject matter is commonplace, but its ambience as pure painting.

The seduction between the viewer and the artist's work is limitless. Her imagery imposes a closed world, a world on hold, a world of "infinite duration," reinforced by the subtle changes of color and air flow among the project of her still lifes, which are also the normal objects of her home life as, to be exact, specific to her studio.

Dulduluan's studio is a person in an epoch when homes were built with a sense of permanence, to be handed down from one generation to another. It was built in the early 1960s of material which could freely disassembled ancestral houses all over Luzon.

The floor was designed around a Sto. Niño relief, over 150 years old, which Dulduluan bought from the late Nguyen Ty-Siaruna.

The walls were built of bricks used by the Americans to build the old storage and ice plant at the ruins of century, which was torn down in the late '70s to give way to LRT tracks.

The studio is a short walk on flagstones of pedro stone from the house proper.

Once inside, the artist's personality dominates every nook and corner, reflecting her taste and civilized tastes. Colonial furniture, silverware, dynasty porcelains and rare artifacts mingle with ancient baskets and chick weaves by tribes in the hinterlands. This is Dulduluan's sensitive sensorium. No one is allowed inside, not even her grandchildren whom she dotes on.

Her husband is a writer and publisher Manny.

There is no smells in this country quite like Dulduluan's. One can imagine her as peace in this world she created, spending long hours unfolding tiny petals with her pastel and charcoal sticks and dull. One turn or cuffs it self-servant. I call it sweet weakness, the kind that beguiles an artist in the quest of excellence.

More often than not, her paintings focus on flowers and old artifacts. Flowers provide her with the challenge to release form and color. In this sense color is a layman habit to discern.

"For example," she says, "there are several tones of white in one lily" it takes her eight layers of pastel dust to render a Ming jar or a copper pot.

Dulduluan paints with history in her mind, with all her instincts behind her when she faces an empty Canson paper. Keiser Lucinda Hoyek and Flemish masters, Chardin for whom still lifes the last vestiges of story have vanished), Odilon Redon, and even William Harnett, the great American master of the trompe l'oeil.

Also present are Fe Tinsiba Herrera, Guillermo Tolentino, Ismael Mirasol and Dominador Castañeda, who were her professors at the University of the Philippines School of Fine Arts in 1951-1956.

But her main issue has to be Edgar Degas (1834-1917), who used pastel to develop his flowers, all of which show his preoccupation with catching a crystal moment that gives permanent value even to the most transitory subject.

Degas, one of the greatest draftsmen of all time, successfully bridged the gap between the Old Masters Traditions and modernity.

Dulduluan continues to be reenlightened by Degas' meticulous but inventive rendering of knowledge, and the passion to work and rework the same subjects, as she does, to achieve ever greater understanding and perfection.

Dulduluan's career as a painter started late—she did not even have a solo exhibit until she was 30, but it proves durable.

Although her exhibit at the SM Art Center is the largest she has ever held, it is still a provisional report. Three days later, she still be 70. She can accomplish more. She, in fact, is still peaking.

"STILL Life on a White Stool"

Rendering the state of the art

By Johnathan Ulysses Rendina
Contributor

IN THE DISCOURSE OF TECHNOlogy the phrase "state of the art" refers to the highest stage of development achieved by a scientific field, technique or device. Its origins lie in the ancient Greeks' conception of technology as intertwined art forms.

Pre artist Alvin Villaruel, painting in both a reflective and discursive exercise where the visual examines the mechanical, indeed, where art reflects on the state of the art.

Villaruel, a Fine Art major at the University of the Philippines, is obsessed with technology, its complex evolution and profound social impact.

In "Pendel," his latest solo exhibit in West Gallery at SM Megamall (ref. 41 9/F/M), Villaruel runs his brush on technologies of mobility, carriers of peril and promise, and the journeys men and machines take together.

Villaruel paints these reflections in photorealistic style, strategically diffusing backgrounds or portions of images or deeper nuances or highlight perspective.

The entire locates his imagery in the past, often sourced from vintage photographs published in the National Geographic, thus rendering them inherently nostalgic but, at the same time, irresistible.

For Villaruel, the state of the art is at best tentative and at worst artifact and illusionary. Today's cutting-edge, after all, is tomorrow's museum piece, a mere footnote to the history of human genius.

And so, while Villaruel's pieces are shrouded in nostalgia, they are implicitly counter-romantic instruments in subtle experiments.

"Walking in Berlin," for example, showing a man in a suit in an old-looking, human-powered vehicle circa 1950s is the artist's satirical depiction of a foible in postmodern history. All dressed up, the fine and the restless, it seems, has nowhere to go.

Direct contrasts

In the series "Our Home in the Sky," Villaruel presents a large diptych, two paintings that are one and the same, really but for their orientation and inverted color hues. Here, a gigantic shell, like hollowed marine bizarre in outlook, dwarfing a house that lies to the middle of nowhere. Taken together, the two paintings are direct contrasts, a positive and negative binary that metaphorically conveys technology's cosmic duality.

At the heart of Villaruel's body of work is a rich philosophical discourse that rejects technological determinism. There is a post-humanistic tone in the artist's imagery, human figures are often either incidental in the overall composition or paradoxically symbolic of a fear that symbiotic techno-mechanical relationship.

In "Cakewalk with Atlantis," depicting a lone astronaut precariously perched on the side of a space shuttle, Villaruel flexes our engagement with technology in an acrophobic dance of win-or-a-disaster-happening art in motion.

In "Contemplating the Future" the artist portrays a boy deep in thought, staring on what appears from a distance as a big, rusty mechanical ball. The ball is actually an ocean mine, a vintage weapon of mass destruction that has been washed ashore.

In this painting, Villaruel masterfully renders the irony of life's innocence. The boy is staring on a time bomb—contemplating of a mere but is already doomed.

"CONTEMPLATING the Future"

Intramuros *treasures* seek safe haven

TABERNACLE

Starts on page A1

to show that these people do not know what is happening in the IA, she says.

Most people are not aware that IA holds a collection of over 6,000 Philippine antiques ranging from furniture to statuary, from altar frontals to religious paintings, acquired by former Central Bank governor Jaime Laya when he became IA action officer.

The collection is now estimated to be worth half a billion pesos. Most of the pieces are stashed, others displayed or used in offices, corridors and lobbies of the building, while some 200 items are out on loan.

Museum researcher Armando Arbes-day, who has been with IA since 1983, has been protecting and clinging to this collection through the years, and he fits Harper conqueror Mr. s have accepted guardian of ra-dional heritage.

ANGELO of the Holy Trinity

Still intact

Harper, former Heritage Conservation Society president and buzz-to culture columnist, was installed as IA administrator on March 24 while having a protracted court battle with previous administrator Dominador Street over the defacement of the Walled City.

As soon as she took over IA, she started tackling "an urgent inventory chore on all the antique treasures... diligently documented by Laya in the books when he left." She has included every piece held in the National Museum, Casa Manila, the National Historical Institute, San Agustin Church—even one or three she says the wife of a former official borrowed for a meeting exhibit and never returned.

"I want to be sure that the collection Laya so carefully put together is still intact and all accounted for," she says.

And what goodly treasures there are here! Eyes pop out upon seeing the numerous santos and altarpieces; the unforgettable Krisnas from the Silks to the linen in Binakon, a life-size Immaculada Concepcion; a pair of Bamboo Bontoque paintings; a Paloma de la Rosa oil on canvas, "El Tesoro del Glorioso Patrona (what has

DIANATE altar and retable of Madonna and Child

ANGELS treasure on the tabletop

TWO of some

Anet", a primitivist rendition of the Pieta just above a harmonium; cabinets, chairs, and a lane-sized commode now worth millions; retablo and retablos of ornately carved Philippine hardwoods.

Preparings state

Not lack of space, some of the furniture pieces are piled up to a corridor while many of the smaller items have been laid on the floor and tables-tops. Their deteriorating condition is quite evident, such as the paintings mostly fading, and any monochromatic piece on silk have now burrowed by insects.

The precarious state these treasures are in is further aggravated by the fact that IA is sharing a floor with the Commission on Elections. And with these perennial tensions the Comelec is having, an accidental or mysterious fire would readily reduce the highly flammable, brittle artifacts and pieces to ashes.

"The fire department is just across the street," Harper says with a wry smile.

That's why she says a need for the establishment of a museum to house these fragile treasures. Bites over 2,000 items to the collection are undocumented pieces, an architectural museum is in the works, right where the Comelec used to be.

An inspired move was to restore the design of the museum after that of a Spanish-colonial church. Thus, it is now undertaking a grand project to see how the reconstruction of San Ignacio Church and Convent, based on extant photographs taken before it was bombed out during the war.

As soon as the papers are finalized, the cornerstone will be laid this year. Construction is projected to be finished in two years. And soon we will be seeing these pieces in a house of worship where they, of course, belong.

ALTARPIECES in the corridor

PAINTINGS! Post-and-19th-century harmonium

100 Kwentong Peyups

Aba's liquid *love*

By Alma Cruz Mislat
Contributor

ABA LUUCH DALENA IS savoring her third Chinese-zodiac cycle this year. What better way to celebrate this milestone than to recount an unbidden element in her heart?

"Liquid Love," Dalena's sixth solo exhibit, presents paintings dominated by blood-red splashes of enamel on canvas and paper, and acrylic monotypes.

Dalena claims inspiration from the thought and belief in a love that is strong, selfless and incomparable, like Christ's. Her paintings are reminiscent of Jackson Pollock's drip-action paintings but done in similar flaming red. In her words, the paintings represent "a lot of mixed emotions within me—the thought of death and violence, assurance and hope, confusion and pain when I think of Christ's death, which is not unlike the political killings happening in our country."

Also, as Sabana Juana Magdalena, a son of three daughters of the sculptor, creative and movement painter Danny Dalena and the celebrated, passionate and creative sculptor Julie Lluch.

The eldest, Ami, finished her Master of Fine Arts in Film Production at a Fulbright scholar at New York University and has, this early, already received a number of awards as an independent filmmaker.

The youngest, Bid, a Human Biology graduate of University of the Philippines Los Baños, is also an awarded filmmaker and sculptor, painter, composer and musician.

Aba was a precocious child. At age 6, she held her first solo exhibit of 300 clay animal sculptures called "Mga Hayop."

Three years later, she had another show, "Obra ni Aba," clay sculptures on the Pardon of Christ.

She took up painting and had her solo painting exhibit in 1990 titled "Isaiah 53:4: Montage to the Man of Sorrows."

Her fourth solo exhibit in 2000, "Perpasan: 9 Livin Plus Wan!" was a mixed-media installation and sculptures of iron, followed by "Home Works" in 2003, an exhibit of paintings and sculptures at Lopez Museum.

Dalena is a Bachelor of Fine Arts graduate from UP Diliman. She has also been an art teacher for children in various schools in the past 18 years while composing songs and singing with her alternative rock band, Beckbiats.

"Liquid Love" presents 4 ft x 7 ft triptych enamel on canvas, which is the title of the show. Other paintings are 3 ft x 3 ft "Red Raiders Whites: A Sanctioned Life" series and "Blood Bought" series.

The 4 ft x 3 ft acrylic on canvas, "Tal Pueblo, Tal Gobierno," is the only mirrored work in the exhibit.

The exhibit runs until July 31.

The author is the executive director of Managing Mirkt Art Revolution (MMART) and co-author of "Beyond the Great Wall: A Family Journey," which won a Nestor Book Award in Biography in 2006. MMART is holding the 2008 Mismagering Mirkt Art Competition. Visit www.mismagering.com; e-mail mismagering@gmail.com or acmislat2000@yahoo.com.

"[illegible] for the Innocent"

"TAL PUEBLO, Tal Gobierno"

MONDAY, JULY 14, 2008 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER D1

LIFESTYLE Arts & Books

Some productions were a little raw, some run-of-the-mill, some straining under their own weight—and a few bad apples

TUKOD Banaqais and Shemaine Contawe-Buencamino in "Ang Balanghiraang Mga Reyna," written and directed by Floy Quintos

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Virginal, indeed

By Walter Ang
Contributor

IF A PLAY IS THE FRUIT OF A playwright's labor, then collaborators like directors, actors, set designers and costume designers are the ones who tend and nurture the tree into full bloom...

In this year's Virgin Labfest, the artistic collaboration of these various disciplines have produced four main sets of three one-acts that were staged at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, providing audiences with a veritable cultural of subject matters. A separate set was dedicated to children's plays adapted from published stories, while another set had three plays from last year's fest.

Though we were able to interview festival artistic director Rody Vera before the fest's opening, its details on staging were parceled out in the lineup and synopsis for each play. And there lies the fun and excitement of the Labfest, you truly never know what you're going to get.

With these many productions, audiences were treated to some that were a little raw, others choice picks, still others that were run-of-the-mill. Some showed the actors under their own weight. Then there were a few bad apples.

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2ND QUARTER REPORT CARD IN PERFORMING ARTS

An explosion of talent

By Amadis Ma. Guerrero
Contributor

STILL CELEBRATING ITS centennial, the University of the Philippines pulled out all stops for its big "Paunawang-tanaw sikhang" (Beloved University) concern at the Cultural Center of the Philippines—a history of UP through song, dance, theater spectacle, poetry, symphonic music and film.

One did not have to be a UP product to enjoy and appreciate the explosion of talent, rare lineup, and the mastering of hundreds of performers from the ranks of the students, professors, and noted alumni.

The full-scale recreation of the First Quarter Storm years was stirring. The drum corps and the gymnasts were awesome. And the haunting, majestic anthem by the great Ryannor Abellanida, "UP Naming Mahal" (UP Beloved), for any lover of music, was affecting. So, from this music lover, kudos.

Feel-good

In "Blue Boys" (Bayanihan Philippines), directed by Chuti Arespacochaga, Uncle Ianggee Gruenhut (), five members of an all-male band go on a supposed world tour (including Manila) to preach good, old-fashioned Catholic values (like virginity), using the jargon and the music of the young.

A choice of name to go solo triggers a crisis, but the group emerges with their faith and friendship intact.

The rock musical is feel-good and electrifying. And the five young, fresh talents act, sing and choreography by Jason Diamond up a storm. JV Ibarra, Red Concepcion, Rashoo Uy, Herb Angeles and Chrrry Hernando.

UP-based Eugene Castillo capped his eventful, first year after as music director and principal conductor of the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra with the rousing 2007 centennial Ralph Vaughn Williams, "Sinfonia No.5 in D Major" (Give Us Peace). It was an emotional mainstay for Castillo, who was given a standing ovation.

Three major choirs breathed life into the Ildefonso Santos Walk Williams, John Bright and Jessie Santos in 222 the Philippine Madrigal Singers, under Mark Anthony Carpio, the Ateneo de Manila College Glee Club, organized way back in 1921 and now led by Ms. Lourdes Montes, and the College of the Immaculate Conception Chorale from Reyes Fritzie Arcilla. Mixed blue memories.

The soloists were baritone Andrew Fernando (who projected well although he had done better work) and American soprano Sandra Nikkiers (who was adequate). The PPO's 220th season opens on Sept. 12.

Intense singing

At the Francisco Santiago Theater (RDO Tower), in the close of the MCO Foundation's Summer Arts Festival, we witnessed intense singing and vivacity from baritone Fernando and, even more, from mezzo-soprano Cherlene Gumayao.

The production was the one-hour opera by Reto Bertoli, "Bluebeard's Castle," with its menacing atmosphere and appropriately dissonant music (an excellently interpreted by pianist Mary Anne Espina). Reigning soprano Rochelle Cornelius, trade been her triumph in the

CHOIRMASTER Bert Robledo with the Ateneo de Glee Club and Chorale

CONDUCTOR Eugene Castillo in a celebratory concert with PPO

Virginal, indeed

To next page D4

Pruning incest

Layeta Abaya once again tackles her obsession with incest between siblings in "Las Monitas de Gloria." Nancy was fantastic that her entry last year, "Elsa Insular," was chosen for managing, fortunately for those who got to watch both her plays, it became clear "Las Monitas" was essentially the same lemma.

Which is not to say that "Las Monitas" was not a strong piece, given its tight dialogue, intrinsic rhythm and Tanya Bumgarner's sensitive direction. It did have a strong branch that needed clipping in the overly staccato first Gumayao as a working-class grass. Gumayao bravely struggled with the Tagalog lines but ultimately was not able to project the beaming of mind to his characters.

Too long, too adult

Mich de Veyra's tour of glory-to-the-dark continues, props and puppets as a device to push his adaptation of "Terengganu" (under his own direction) number) well, but the material suffered an overly long overture and many that sounded too adult and heavy for a children's musical.

Both Jose Jimmy "Ang Dalawa Mong Liking," translated by Jerrence Go and directed by Lee Rudy, uses an engaging clash of culture and religion. Rudy was able to add colorful theatrical touches with background scenes to add to his mise en scène as well as the use of a newspaper vending, gossip-mongering Greek chorus. However, the story left indeed for one hour running time, and seemed to be thrashed out into a two act play.

Both "Terengganu" and "Salawa's" staggings were overruled and here for the standard small stage size used for all kiddies' productions, but should with

ARNOLD Reyes and Joey Paras in Rogelio Braga's "Ang Bayot, ang Mananahi, at ang Pulubi-Pulubi sa Kanto Mahalakhagot na Pagkikinig sa Kanta ng Lansangan ni Marte," directed by Mon Confiado

better to larger venues.

Fresh air

Jorge Tiamzon's adaptation of "Pito Ito, Ito Ito Ito Ito, Pito Ito Ito Ito Ito" directed by Maryo Escalona and Jose Pagkaliwangan's adaptation of "Unos Mismo Nanay Ikong si Darna" directed by Catherine Racoma were a breath of fresh air and earnest energy.

In "Pito Ito," pretty Ito Sarah (Angelica Gloria) a girl who thought her neighbor was a witch. Coaching her to add variety to her delivery of lines would complement her charming confidence and talent. Escalona's use of a young cameraman and live broadcast scenes in the story's TV genre show scene was a clever element to add excitement and fun for audiences.

Poignant

Many adults in the audience of "Unos Mismo" were moved to tears by the director's poignancy. A wise move by Racoma was to balance her otherwise fun and frisky interpretation of the Filipino Everyman. Further development will make these two children's plays blossom into their full potential.

Ripe for the picking

Rene Hinchliffe's "Pancit ng Lungsod" provided a sweet, relaxed and genuine theatrical experience with strong acting from its ensemble cast, which transcharacterizes with Villanueva, Tagalog and English to tell the story of schoolgirls and their encounters with one of the girls' uncle's ghost.

Sets of satire, especially those featuring schoolgirls in everyday non-eventful situations like "Kanyahe Chinkeebot Cookbook," "Ichiga Mandaluyong (Kanyahe-ko) and "Mandaluyong," and "Parachute Rice," will surely appreciate the acting and pacing conventions employed by director Inabahin Rabido (such as the girls momentarily sighing loudly while reading in the last line "The sky is so blue!" and that talking to ghosts seem like the most normal thing in the world) that are so characteristic of Japanese animation.

Despite the cultural quirks, however it did not try to be anything else other than what it was; Anna's dances and scene-stealing singing was a pleasure to watch.

Sharp, witty

Rogelio Braga's "Ang Bayot, ang Mananahi, at ang Pulubi-Pulubi sa Isang Nakatabingi na Higlalimang sa Kanto ng Lansangan ni Marte," directed by Bob Ong, offered sharp and witty dialogue in a tightly packed and slick construction. Reporter zipped merrily along between actors Joey Paras and Arnold Reyes, as they played an odd couple who offered enlightening and insightful points on the many genres of discrimination: political, geographical, religious, workplace-related, gender or otherwise.

Hilarious and never preachy, "Ang Bayot" deserves a run that should be as long as, or longer than, its title. Hopefully, it doesn't end at Pistas will stay in Manila long enough to be recast in order to preserve the great timing he and Reyes show.

Irrelevant vision

Floy Quintos' "Ang Kalaguhigan ng Mga Reyna" (under his own direction) presents a strong argument for a panel. Its solution to our country's ills: Would we be better off as a monarchy? He gives us a lady President who became the Philippines' first queen, and her conversations with a hairdresser on matters of state (not state).

Shamaine Buencamino was brilliant as Quintos' beautifully written character. Wisely steering clear of aping known female presidents, Buencamino imbued Queen Rolanda with a rotting hypocrisy kept under a veil of iron will.

Bolanglin, as the disciples and narcissistic hairdresser, was the perfect foil to the queen's cravings. Through his reversal acquiescence to her choices, we saw that he was also under the queen's delusional sensibilities. Quintos' "Bow and" Buencamino's interpretation effectively showed his inverse and burning desire to uplift the country. Surreal, funny and full to the brim with strong writing and strong acting, this production was hands down the best of the batch.

A 'darlas' for everyone

Which brings us to the one fruit that casts a decisive opinion. People either love or hate the dorias, and in the same vein it was impossible to have an in-between reaction to Allan Lopez's "Hiningsingang Hinirenyo" (directed by Nicco Manalo).

The story line uses an interregnum and his captive. It features elements such as a female actor playing the interrogator with a concurrent phallus sticking out of her groin, and constant interruptions to the exposition as the interrogator goes into dances whenever he's possessed by a dyslexic horse.

Less performance than it was performance art with dialogue, as the production sustained audiences' patience and sensibilities, it also challenged notions of what theater should or could be. Unapologetic in its strangeness and dark, windy thought-provoking, it could not be more different any other way except as moving, lyric, sense-gentle, genre-reducing, awesome and leftening all at the same time. It was either the Lolabee's worst production, or its best.

E-mail the author at mallsingh@yahoo.com

Canada-based pianist in concert

By Pablo A. Tariman
Contributor

VANCOUVER-BASED PIANIST AND pedagogue Marguerite Echano has a lot to say about teaching and what she thinks is an ideal music teacher.

"It's a great feeling to know that the student who started with me at age four keep coming back just to learn and play more music," she told the Inquirer. "That means that I succeeded in instilling love for music for students even if later in their lives they chose other careers."

So what is her idea of a good music teacher?

I asked this question when I learned that a classic teacher from an arts school on the slope of Mt. Makiling dressed as a top music scholar on the day of her graduation, to say that the (the student) would never amount to anything no matter how hard she tried. The student was one of the first prize-winning students in the school and whose playing impressed the country's leading pianist.

Ingrid Echano: "I would presume that a music teacher has a genuine love for music. She should communicate that love to her students by being an understanding and compassionate person. Some students may not be that talented but the love that they want to learn I consider a big responsibility on my part as a teacher."

One teacher she will always remember is noted keyboard polygrapher Bella Sings, who Echano remembers as the pianist who edited the Beethoven sonatas. When she was still in Washington, DC, Sings would encourage from Boston to her piano to reach her until 10 in the morning.

"What I like about him was his honesty and humility and his ability to communicate with people. His sense of information is on par with students' and he shares his skills down to them. He also understands the fact that studying music is not the single area that students but the human relationship that goes with it."

Echano, along with Martha Brickman, J. Greg Pantoja and Priscilla de la Pena-e Sison from St. Scholastica's, will be heard in a special fund-raising concert on Saturday, July 19, at St. Gerard's Hall.

Award-winning

A winner of three prestigious European music competitions, Michiko has performed in major music centers in Europe and North America, including the Carnegie Hall.

Even on audiences generally go for solo concerts, Echano shares the joy of ensemble playing, which is the attraction at the St. Cecilia's Hall concert.

"I always encourage everyone that you know you have to yourself but to other pianists as well," she said.

For the concert, classical guitarist Hanh Nguyen will be unable to perform as she was diagnosed with stress.

However, she has generously donated her CDs for sale during the concert. All profits will be donated to St. Stephen's Rotary Music Foundation of St. Scholastica's College and the Loyola School of Theology of the Ateneo de Manila University.

Call 5350000 (St. Scholastica's College, Music department) and 4266138, 4266431-35 local 3003 (Loyola School of Theology).

PIANISTS Marguerite M. Echano and Martina Brickman with classical guitarist Hanh Nguyen

Heritage diary of *Negros Oriental*

Text and photos by Donna R. Morilla
Contributor

UNITY THROUGH HERITAGE—the one message that the Filipino Heritage Festival has been promoting since 2003 through the annual National Heritage Month celebrations.

For the closing of the 2008 celebrations recently, the festival show Bamaguete City in Negros Oriental in the Visayas (the spelling had been in Cagayan de Oro in Mindanao). The choice could not have been more appropriate, for Bamaguete is a model of world cultures and unity.

The high point of the closing ceremonies was the inauguration of the fledgling Negros Tourism Village, a project of Gov. Emilio Macias II. Located just beside the Hall of Justice in Barangay Bajul, the village is composed of 25 hectares of reclaimed open and bamboo bush assigned to each local government unit of the province.

In 1998, Macias opened a showroom and gallery of Negros Oriental arts and crafts, called Sidlakang Negros, in Kanlaon Negros. The present Sidlakang Negros Tourism Village amplifies that concept in an enabling form.

It is the one location where the people of Negros Oriental come together as one to promote their harvests, delicacies, products, culture and tourist sites. A cheap and open-air multiclass provider local artists with an avenue to showcase their talents and skills.

Leon Kilat

Among those who showcased their talents were Silliman University's College of Performing Arts. They performed a play based on the life of Pantaleon Villegas and his uprising (sung in sonnets, Bathyl known as Leon Kilat [Leon of the Lightning]). Villegas led the revolutionaries in Cebu during the Philippine revolution against Spain.

Villegas' relatives would tell stories how the folk hero had the uncanny ability to seemingly appear and disappear at will with the aid of his brothers-in-law and with the speed of lightning.

Those who saw Villegas in battle would claim "he would advance toward his enemies even with bullets buzzing around him. It would be difficult to hit him. Or even if he is hit, he simply shook himself off and he is not even hurt."

Villegas came from Barong, Negros Oriental, whose people are known for their bravery and for standing up to the Moro marauders who historically raided and pillaged the town and kidnapped the natives for the slave trade.

"Bawal! Bawal!" (Don't! Stand up and fight!) was the rallying cry of the town folk during the raids that occurred well into the Spanish era, when the friars built massive churches and fortifications to ward off the marauders.

According to the historical notes of Fr. Fronton Segner Jr., the raids eventually ceased and the town was able to develop.

On May 2, 1849, the Parish of Barong—under the patronage of St. Augustine of Hippo—was established in accordance with Church law and those of the patronato real. Recollect Fray Joaquin Sevilano was its first parish priest.

During the term of Fray Jacque Gamero, Jr., the church acquired a pipe organ built by the House of Roque de Zamposa in Spain.

In November 2001, the National Museum declared the church as a National Cultural Treasure. It is being enforced by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts.

Silliman

Meanwhile, Dumaguete is best known for Silliman University.

Founded on Aug. 20, 1901, Silliman is the oldest American university in Asia. Whose Protestant missionaries of the Presbyterian Church started the school. They named it after Dr. Horace Brinsmade Silliman (1822–1903), a retired businessman and philanthropist from New York.

Silliman began as a boy's school and started to offer college degree courses in 1909. It opened its doors to girls in 1912. In 1938, it became the first school outside of Manila to be recognized as a university.

As part of the Heritage Month celebrations, Silliman University hosted the "Handurawan" photo exhibit.

"Handurawan is a graphic recollection of fond memories," explained artist Benjy Balbella, who hosted the event.

Images of old Dumaguete, most of which are those of Silliman University during its earlier years, were put on display.

The photographs of Silliman students having fun—some even playing tennis—were well-preserved. The images provoked wistful-hearted memories.

A stranger brother of Silliman University is Silliman Hall. Constructed in 1903, the building is a typical American structure designed in a colonial mansion. It used to hold the school library, classrooms and faculty until World War II when it was seized by the Japanese who used it

VERTIGO D4

BACONG church has been declared as a Historical Cultural Treasure.

Dumaguete and the rest of the province are a cultural and natural showcase

BAJUMAN Nature Resort

BAJUMAN Lake

BACONG church

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Aspire 4520G-552G16Mi
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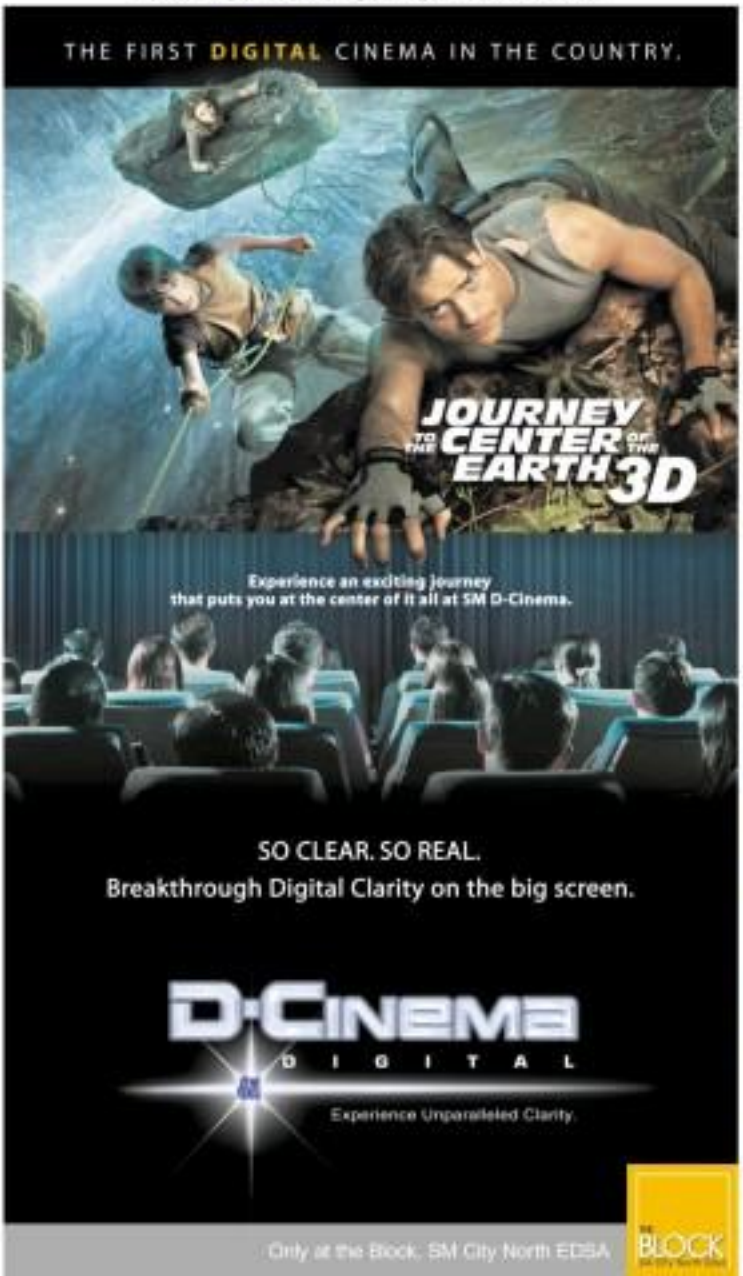
Heritage diary of Negros Oriental



A navigate D3

architectural and landscape styles.

Silliman Hall houses the university printing press. Artifacts and archaeological discoveries dating back to 2,000 years ago as well as an ethnographic collection of Philippine tribal minorities are also on exhibit.

Silliman Hall also serves as the perfect setting for those in the mood for a little moonlight, such as the heritage festivities where folk dances and tondinawas were performed by the locals and sing-along Pantaon group, respectively.

Nature tours

While Negros Oriental truly has a lot to offer, heritage-wise, its natural resources are also something to look forward to.

For those who enjoy nature treks, there's Balinsasa Nature Resort in Bayawan-Sandatan, Guihon, home of three mysterious waterfalls on the far side of Balinsasa Lake. A one-hour-to-a-pool hike for hiking can be found on the road ahead.

Balinsasa Lake is 289 meters above sea level and a "basserve" boasts forested body of water situated along a northwest-southeast direction with an area of 24 hectares.

Another body of water worth visiting is Lukon Anonc, the narrow channel between Negros and Cebu islands known to have one of the biggest concentrations of crocodiles in the world.

From this City, visitors can avail themselves of the tour and are enlighten and sometimes gaping upons whales in their natural habitat.

The tour also includes a stopover at Manjuyod's White Sand Bar, a 6-kilometer-long strip of white beach in the middle of Bohol's Bais Bay. The area is visible only during low tide and disappears at high tide. Cottages accommodate picnickers and overnighters.

E-mail the author at dorsan@yahoo.com

COTTAGE at Manjuyod

MANILA journalists enjoy a dip during high tide at Manjuyod White Sand Bar.

SILLIMAN Hall

LIFESTYLE

Along with the launch of the book by top cultural historian Nicanor Tiongson, the great filmmaker's 'Genghis Khan,' which created a sensation in the 1952 Venice film fest, will be screened July 16 at CCP

Book pays tribute to Manuel Conde, father of RP indie cinema

THE BOOK "THE CINEMA OF Manuel Conde" by Nicanor G. Tiongson will be launched July 16, 2:30 p.m., at the Little Theater of Cultural Center of the Philippines as a special feature of the Cinemalaya Independent Film Festival.

The launching is part of "Juan Tamad Goes Indie," a tribute to the great filmmaker and artist Manuel Conde, which includes an exhibit on Manuel Conde and the screening of six of his surviving films, the famous "Genghis Khan" at 6:15 p.m. right after the book launch.

The hardbound coffee-table book throws valley Conde to award Philippine cinema's great directors, whose significance has been overlooked. Popular both here and abroad, most of his films were full of social insight and commentary that are still relevant today.

The book measures 8½" x 11" and has 260 pages of over 800 rare photographs and images in duotone and color. Book-launching price is P800.

The project is the first of the 12-part Philippine Film Directors Series supported in part by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), in cooperation with Tribung Pilipino Cultural Foundation, and published by the University of Santo Tomas Publishing House.

The book traces the artist's life and work as a film director, writer, actor and producer through the 40 films he created in 1940-1974. It depicts his humble beginnings in Ozac, Camarines Norte, his apprenticeship in Filipino Films, and his first directorial stint in DZV Pictures (1940-1942).

It chronicles the Best Golden Age in Conde's career (1946-1952), when he re-established his own MC Productions and came out with "Si Juan Tamad," "Si Juan

BOOK II

"Si JUAN Tamad," 1941

GARFIELD

A. LIPIN

BY JOJI ARRIERA

PULOOK

BY RAFLAND DATUIN PALAMBUNG

PUSAO BABOY

BY RH JUNIOR

DIVINE COMEDY

BY ETTIEN TABALINAS

MAKIKIKOMOS

BY JOHNIE TEJERO

SILAHIS

BY DARWIN PEREZ

BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO

LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHONGLO

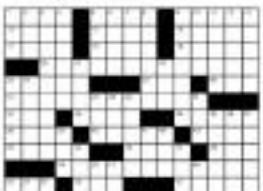
KIKO MACHINE

BY MARK ARRIERA

BEH

BY DANIEL SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Barry Eib
McLean, Va.

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

ACROSS
1 Cuisine
5 Lives a toxic lifestyle?
10 Sundance kid
14 Biblical fold
15 Hawkeye's hat
16 Driveway feature
17 Westernized beans
18 Duke of Prance
19 Lagerie purchases
20 Change in taste
21 Lawn ornaments
23 44 women
25 Liberal's opposite
26 Chimney mess
27 Rights and wrongs
28 Dean's deeds
29 Outstanding name
30 Bank Guard
34 Georgia Pol
36 Lin-tuck
37 Bar-b-Cue's
40 Gallic girl
41 Candidate drop
42 Hispanic pepper variation
43 Arch., e.g.
44 Bar standard
47 Mostly fat-free dish
48 Wall Street figure
49 Gap-toothed
50 Cookware note
51 Concert intro
52 How baseball?
53 Original half
54 Hawaiian port
55 Jewish month
57 Philatelist's collection
58 Dot breaks
59 Lit. or Gloss.

DOWN
1 Cliff dweller
2 Bad day for Bambi
3 Mid-June coincidence, abr.
4 Generic surname
5 Lives a toxic lifestyle?
6 Part of DNA
7 Profs with (all of) rank
8 Mimosa
9 Modern slang
10 Pennies NYC mean to
11 Resignation declaration
12 Sing tenderly
13 Old Pan pipe
21 Bowling alley pastry
22 Table spreader
23 Squared
24 Cash an oath
26 Quick nap
29 Weeding tool
31 Reflection
32 Ruler Wagneson
33 Ski park rent
35 Gentle
37 "Wide-o" to sail
38 Dancer
41 Groceries
42 Groceries
43 Groceries
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59 Groceries

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis SudoKu

By Dave Green

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			8	1	9			
3		4				9		5
	1			4			3	
	2		1		6		7	
	4			9			2	
5		1				8		2
			3	8	5			
8		9				4		3

Difficulty Level ▼ 7:14

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

8	7	9	4	1	5	6	3	2
6	1	4	3	9	2	8	5	7
3	2	5	7	6	8	9	1	4
1	5	3	9	4	7	2	8	6
2	6	7	8	3	1	5	4	9
9	4	8	5	2	6	3	7	1
4	8	2	1	5	9	7	6	3
5	9	1	6	7	3	4	2	8
7	3	6	2	8	4	1	9	5

Book pays tribute to Manuel Conde, father of RP indie cinema

From page E1

SCENES from "Sijuan Tamad" (1947). Manuel Conde with Aurora Duco, left, and Elsie Reyes

Batid (Arab in Juan Tamad)," "Prinsipe Paris," "Ibon Talisayan de Lara," "Sigfredo" and, most of all, "Genghis Khan," the first Filipino film to compete in an international film festival, in this case the Venice Film Festival in 1952.

A showcase of the popular films Conde did for DPC after his return from Europe (1953-1958), such as the Nido Blanco-Nestor de Villa scenario "Ang Ibong Adarna," "Haw Haw," "Bahala Na," and "Pinguan Basko," as well as MC Productions' "Kras na Kamatayan."

A highlights Conde's second Golden Age (1959-1963), when he produced, directed and starred in his most significant productions, such as "Malvarez" and the three Juan Tamad classics: "Juan Tamad Goes to Congress," "Juan Tamad Goes to Sentro," and "Si Juan Tamad at si Juan Masipag sa Pulitikang Walang Hanggan."

It describes the last years (1964-1985), when Conde did the first episode of the mentioned "Balbacua" and the "Juan Tamad" productions on television, and later removed into politics and treasure-hunting.

The book assesses Conde's contributions to Filipino national cinema through films that embodied Filipino national history; depicted and critiqued local customs and traditions; foregrounded and examined contemporary political and social issues; employed but innovated on the commercial genres of his time; and opened Filipino cinema to the world.

The public is invited.

(SL) MOVIE AD illustrated by National Artist Carlos "Botong" Francisco

Concord Grapes Vs. Obesity and Other Health Risks

Don't look now but our 'expanding' waistline may indicate obesity, and obesity, as everybody knows, puts our health at risk a risky situation.

But before we jump again onto another latest fad in losing waist size, one thing we should do aside from exercising is change our eating — and drinking — habit. It's about time we loaded our bodies with fruits and vegetables abundant in powerful antioxidants and phytonutrients. It's about time we included 100% grape juice made from Concord grapes as part of our healthy diet.

An analysis of data from the National Health and Nutritional Examination Survey in America showed that adults who ate ample fruits like Concord grape juice were significantly less likely to be overweight or obese. Aside from a lower risk of increased waist size, the study also showed that consuming purple/blue fruits and vegetables was also associated with significantly reduced risks in having high blood pressure and low HDL or good cholesterol.

Concord grapes are not called an antioxidant superfood for nothing. Actually, they contain polyphenolics which help to make our body — our mind and heart included — healthy. These antioxidants from Concord grapes protect our cells from the damaging effects of free radicals that may lead to chronic diseases. They help promote a healthy cardiovascular system and stimulate production of nitric oxide to allow greater flexibility to our arteries.

And yes, all these health benefits and more can be found in a glass of Welch's 100% Grape Juice made from Concord grapes. All the natural sweetness, all the delicious taste, all the powerful antioxidants needed to help in the fight against obesity and other health risks.

Drink up to good health now, it's about time.

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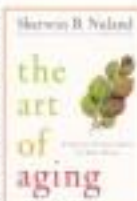
July reads

AS THE BAR MITZVAH of Joy approaches, big-hearted and sharp-tongued Carrole Shapiro, heroine of author Jennifer Weiner's "Certain Girls," is forced to reveal to her daughter the truth about her conception. Funny and tender, the novel is an unforgettable story about love, loss, and the enduring bonds of family.

Gourmet chefs Lucy Hart and Gail Doherty offer a collection of 200 innovative yet simple restaurant-quality recipes



"Gold Thomas" series, sent Dill inexorably pulled to a small California coastal town, and discovers a form of evil that will test him as never before.

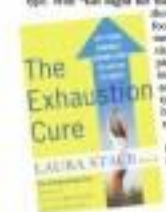
Skillfully melding a sleuth's passion for truth with a humanist's understanding of the heart and soul, Sherwin Nuland has created a wise, frank and inspiring book, "The Art of Aging," the ultimate stage of life's journey.

"Mulberry Park" by Judy Duarte centers on a woman shattered by grief. By responding to a little girl's urgent cries to God, she sets in motion a chain of events that helps us hear the "love of all those around her, in the most unexpected ways.

Feeling fatigued? Wish you could have more get-up-and-go? Let Laura Stachi's "The Exhaustion Cure" help you eliminate the energy bandits from all aspects of your life so you can start living in a way that will boost your energy.

In "Promise of the Widow" by Dorothy Secrist, a young wife from the White Valley dares to break the promise of the widow not to remarry with business, and forever alters the relationship between the two sportsmen.

Dr. Peter D'Adamo offers an individualized health plan that's right for your blood type. With "Eat Right for Your Type," he shows which foods, conditions, spices, vitamins, supplements, medications and exercise types functions best in your system.



"Odd Hours," the fourth book of author Dean Koontz's Odd Thomas series, is set in Pico Mundo, a small town in southern California. Odd is a short-order cook with a gift for seeing the dead who have unfinished business in the world of the living.

In "How to Be Single" by Liz Tuccillo, Julie is fed up with the sleepy-eyed men of being single in Manhattan. Quitting her job, she sets off from Paris to Rio to Sydney, Beijing, Mumbai and Reykjavik to find out how women around the world are dealing with singlehood.

Deepak Chopra presents the quantum alternative to growing old, by inviting readers to discard assumptions and paradigms about who we are and what the true nature of our body is via his latest, "The 4-Minute Ageless Body, Timeless Mind."

All the books are available at Powerbooks.

Specialty Store (at Greenbelt 4 (7570428 to 29); Megamall (6322898 to 99); Alabang Town Center (8505662 to 63); Glorietta 3 (7525070); Shangri-La (6308824 to 25); Robinson's Place Ermita (5070333); Mall of Asia (5566943); Festival Supermall (8598221); Trinoma (9623346 to 82) and SM Cebu (032-2309560 to 69).

Celebrating Asia-Pacific art

From page E4

Mario Tanigawa, Jay Tiraz, Mae Valderas, Glue Sticks and Constantino Zervoudi.

In his editor's note, Rendon said that he chose to explore themes that reflected his passion for contemporary art and design as well as interest in urban development.

How also explores current directions on the local art scene, including fine art photography, installation and video art, and how they are received abroad.

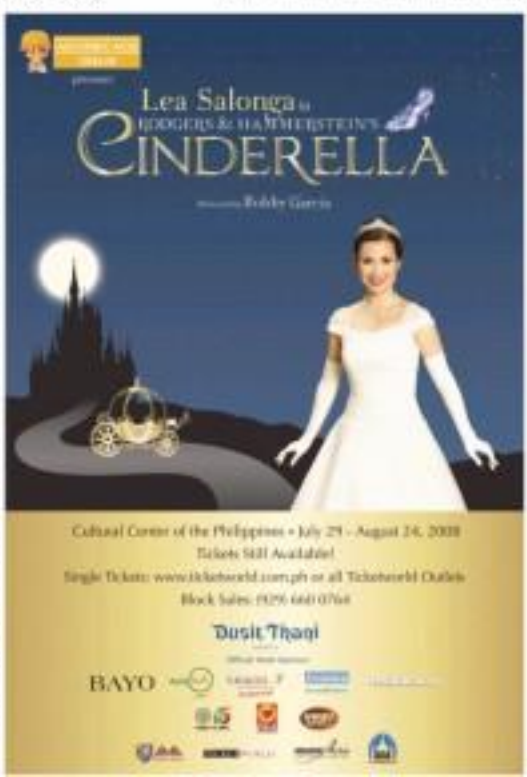
He added: "Each issue of this quarterly magazine will be developed by guest curators whose different points of view (will) provide a fresh venue where creativity is challenged and interesting ideas are recognized. It is a design laboratory of sorts, where the curators are free to experiment and share with us their world."

For its second salon, How will be curated by Cubespace, while the November-January 2009 issue will see the collaborative efforts of lifestyle store owners and entrepreneurs Chito Iñiguez and Ricky Toledo, both merchandise consultants for Home Decor and Furnishings.

How Magazine is available in all leading books, specialty bookstores, and boutiques for P100. For inquiries, e-mail how@inquirer.com.ph.

E-mail the author at dmsilla@yahoo.com

PATRICK Pino and Daphne Chotia Pino



Celebrating Asia-Pacific art

By Desiree R. Madlis
Contributor

CAN AN ART GLOSSY DEpart from the tradition of the artsy-fartsy? Flow, a new concept magazine, purports to do just that—without, however, sacrificing the art. It aims to showcase the fresh ideas and talents of designers and artists from the Asia-Pacific Region.

Launched recently at The Spa, Ayala Stockbrokers Global City, Flow is a quarterly magazine described as "covering culture and celebration of the upcoming passion, craftsmanship, and modernistic of the country's top designers from photography, fashion, interior design, graphic design and other media."

Published by Golden Eighty Publications, Inc., it hopes to reach the young professionals and successful entrepreneurs who are exposed to new ideas and have an appreciation for its desirability. They also welcome controversy and embrace uniqueness while living a contemporary, cosmopolitan lifestyle.

The maiden issue, at 109-plus pages, is edited by Miguel Rosales and features stories on architect Alex Medalla, designer Kenneth Cobonpue, video artist Jad Ferrer, video photographer and cartoonist Roger Ramirez, food Tessie Beda,

CELEBRATING 21

FLOW's managing editor Kristine Kasan, editorial coordinator Joanna Francisco, executive editor Patricia Aparicio, Angel Encarnacion, Diana Olivas and Paolo Pacigsat

Flow, a new concept magazine, aims to showcase the region's taste-makers

LA GERMANIA - AN AUTHENTIC ITALIAN TRADITION

Signorina Bertazzoni, center left in photo with workers at the first factory near Castelvetro (without shutter)

Perfected Over Generations

Over a hundred years ago, Italian machine-maker, Primetto Bertazzoni and his son Antonio first saw wood-burning cooking stoves arrive in their town from Austria which then made them decide to make their own just for local use. That was the start of an outstanding success story.

The family built their first factory in 1909. After the First World War, they began making cooking stoves on a much larger scale, and launched the brand name, La Germania. The Bertazzonis introduced their first gas hob units in 1955, soon followed by their first gas stoves. The design was further perfected in 1958 with the addition of an oven.

Exports began in 1959, and through the next decades, sales boomed. Today, La Germania cookers are appreciated in 80 countries worldwide. But the makers never forget their roots in the tradition of Italian style, and remain specialists in the very personal craft of cooking.

This traditional poster from 1925 features a white-tiled stove model that was soon going production technology learned by the third generation Bertazzoni artisan working with fire to date.

Where Food is Life

La Germania cookers are made by the Bertazzoni family company in Emilia-Romagna, one of the great culinary regions of the world famous for its prosciutto di Parma, salami and mortadella, delicious pastas, Parmesan cheese and balsamic vinegar.

In Emilia-Romagna, cooking and eating is festive, and generations of Italians have relied on La Germania cookers for the home.

La Germania Italia

ITALIA

A marvel of Italian design and ingenuity, introduced in 1909 by the Bertazzoni family company of Emilia-Romagna, La Germania Ranges and Ovens exude the grace, splendor and stylish savvy that embodies the best of Italy.

La Germania — a well-loved Italian icon of good taste then... and now.

LA GERMANIA
A Proud Italian Tradition Since 1909

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Bronie G. Valerio

IN THIS ISSUE

- Top songs on stars' playlists Dollywood /G4
- Alessandra de Rossi: I talk too much /F4
- Foreign factor in Filipino productions Viewfinder /F2

SRO for a legend

Cinemalaya crowd's cheers overwhelm Anita Linda /F3

New treaty of Paris

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

PARIS—VIRGILIO WORKSHOPS AT THE Paris Cinema International Film Festival yielded valuable lessons for the young Filipino filmmakers and producers that conversed with their French counterparts.

Jim Libiran, whose film "Tribu" won the Fourth Jury Prize at the festival, pointed out that a "new strong of Paris" should be drafted between the two countries.

Un part of the price, "Tribu" will be presented for possible distribution in France.)

Arlene Cuevas, producer of "Kubrador"—featured in the Shots Project presentation—agreed, adding that such a bilateral treaty would expedite co-production deals

turn to

'Foreign factor' figures more strongly in Filipino productions

HAVE YOU NOTICED? MANY more TV and film productions are shooting abroad this year. Here are a couple of reasons why:

Sharon Cuneta flew to London to film most of her scenes for "Caregiver," **Richard Gutierrez** and **KC Concepcion**'s "Be the First Time" will shoot in Greece this month. **Angel Locsin** and **Piolo Pascual** will fly to Australia to co-star in their first film together, after their respective "Iloilo," winds up soon.

Even TV series and shows are occasionally closer in a foreign component. Many live entertainment shows are performed for Filipino communities in different parts of the world. And "team-ups and" previews for Filipino events are getting to be quite the rage.

What's going on? Why does the foreign factor figure more strongly now in Filipino productions, or even as special attraction?

The "globalization" of the Filipino is one consideration. With so many of us living and working abroad, we have become less insular in outlook. Our OFWs aren't the only beneficiaries of this development—their relatives also get to expand their horizons as they enjoy the fruits of their parents' or siblings' foreign labors, which include taste-changing entertainment and information components like DVD players, computers, Internet access, etc.

In addition, we more accept the fact that our "dwellers" cultural mentality still affects our preferences and standards. "Abroad" is still fawned over. "Imported" is still preferred to "local," to production's chief local competitors enjoy an even greater edge.

Plus, foreign locales offer beauty, scenic features, tourist sights, hospitality and economic returns, increased remittances and lifestyles, etc.

And these inherent pros outweigh often-prohibitive expenses for local production to deal with the OFW experience—which, as the success of "Caregiver" indicates, is of great interest and sympathetic resonance among Filipinos overseas.

Plus, despite the hefty cost that shooting abroad add to a production's budget, actor-level TV and film projects include foreign outings in their scenarios to prospective viewers.

Where else would our viewers want local productions to go? An informal survey reveals the outside list:

It's been a long time since a Filipino production was shot in Hawaii, so a repeat visit is decidedly in order. For understandably lovely virtue, Hawaii can't be beat. And the fact that some of its earliest migrant residents were Filipinos could lead to the telling of some very interesting and, theoretically, significant stories.

For a romantic story, Paris and the Amalfi Coast in Italy are logical.

For a comedy, **Dolphy** once filmed a film in Spain and Chiapas to reinvented Manila. Van Down to an estate Hawaii filmed in Arizona, USA. Could today's popular comedians do something similar?

One more personal wish is for an entrepreneurial producer to do a Filipino version of "Around the World in 80 Days," with a globe-trotting Pinoy protagonist literally doing the honors!

Finally, a respondent has come up with this bright idea: Make a movie that shows the updated Seven Wonders of the World, after they shall have been determined by the ongoing online poll.

On 'Oprah'

Oprah Winfrey's talk-magazine show on the Hallmark Channel features these guests and topics this month (June days, 4 p.m.):

• July 10, sports legends Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova on their remarkable friendship and rivalry. What it takes to live personal struggle with cancer.

• July 27, Oprah marks Earth Day by giving green and providing viewers with a list of simple things a family can do to start saving our planet. And **Julia Roberts**, **Jennifer Hudson** and **Al Gore** encourage everyone to join the fight against global warming.

FINALS BID TODAY

Miss Philippines Jennifer Barrientos makes her final bid for the Miss Universe 2008 crown in the competition finals being staged today at the Crowne Convention Center in Nha Trang, Khanh Hoa, Vietnam. Jennifer is competing against 79 other titlists. The color-ful pageant, awaited in 120 countries, will be telecast live on the Hallmark Channel at 9 a.m. and at prime time, 7:30 p.m., on the Velvet channel. Replays tonight at 9 and July 19, 4 p.m. on Hallmark; and July 16, 8:30 p.m. and July 19, 10 p.m. on Velvet.

New treaty of Paris

From page F1

between French and Filipino filmmakers.

"If there were a co-production treaty between our two countries, Filipino companies could avail of tax shelters, for example," Cuevas explained. "It would make the possibility of shooting in France easier and less expensive for us. We can get waivers for certain permits. We can enjoy tax breaks or post-production discounts."

Filipino-French

Adolfo Alix Jr., director of "Adela," said that such a co-production treaty was earlier finalized between the Philippines and Singapore. "[Communist head] Chris Lim signed it. So that there's also a co-production treaty between the Philippines and Canada."

If such a treaty were in place, Cuevas related, "it'd be as if the French government would consider a Filipino film company as French by its being as if [its] a French co-producer."

Mutual benefits

Needless to say, French companies with Filipino partners would also enjoy the same benefits if they were to shoot movies in the country, Alix said.

Alix recounted that he and his colleagues picked up a lot of pointers from the workshops, especially the Jean Project "pitching" platform.

"Among the topics covered were how to look for funding in France, how to pitch your project to prospective French co-producers and distributors, [as] co-production information, media chronology, and theater, TV and video distribution," recounted Alix.

"It's important for young filmmakers to know that there are alternative sources of financing from abroad," Cuevas said. "If you assume get financing locally, you can find your own from other countries."

Case in point: "Adela" has found a worldwide distributor in Vine Films, also noted. "Vine Films is the same company that distributed 'Pioneers of Flying Rabbits,' which is the closing film in the Cinema Directors' Fortnight this year. It also premiered in Sundance. Adela' has been invited to at least two film festivals abroad."

Four seasons

Alix said that Cuevas also found four different financing sources for Jorge Montiel's "Independencia" from Fonds Sud Cinema of France, Hubert Bals of the Netherlands, Prince Claus Fund of Netherlands and the Global Film Initiative of the US.

Ines Jardin, president of the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP), attended the workshops with the young filmmakers.

Funding experts

He observed that today's current crop of producers and filmmakers like Cuevas, Mario Bonjolo and Raymond Lee have become experts in tapping alternative sources of financing.

"Many of the independent filmmakers have become savvy in obtaining foreign funding," said Jardin. "They've learned to lend for themselves."

E-mail: bgomez@philstar.com

FILMMAKER Students from left Ellen Dingdong-Martil, Chris Martinez, Joel Ruiz and Paul Morales. Everyone loves the deadline.

Finally, a complete Cinemalaya

Filmmakers challenged themselves further this year– Tonyboy Cojuangco

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Photos by Ryan Lim

ORGANIZERS OF THE 4TH Cinemalaya Philippine Independent Film Festival were giddy during the opening on Friday at the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP).

"I'm proud to say that all 10 finalists made it this year," said Bobbit Tan, chair of the production and marketing team. In previous years, there was always a casualty, noted Lourdes Gacilan, competition director. She described the last few weeks before the launch as "hora de peligro (danger hour)," when everyone "buckled down to work."

Finish line

Joel Cruz, director of "Buke dagale," recalled 14 "almost 24-hour work days."

Onnah Tolen, who wrote "Mr. Pets Manduman Avenue," said, "I didn't need to be first at the finish line, but I had to get there."

COLLEAGUES. "Working hard to..."

Ellen Dingdong-Martil, director of "Foster," said her assignment was a challenge in itself. "Who would bind a film on classical music? A film about a battered child?"

Michael Christian Cardoz, director of "Tuwhere," agreed that budget was a huge concern all around. "I was fortunate to have worked with kind and generous people."

Obstacles aplenty

Obstacles have always been aplenty in the past, and all were at hand in this year's 10 finalists. In the first Cinemalaya (2005), Francis Xavier Pasion's "Segunda, the Baking Romantic" had to drop out. The following year, Khavn de la Cruz's "Lavarabma" and Jon Lazaro's "Mga Anino sa Ipinulap" were disqualified.

Last year, Ed Lejarso's "Hanggahang sa Buwan" was shown during the festival, but couldn't vie for awards because "technical problems" prevented the filmmaker from submitting on time.

This year, Paul Morales' "Cranberry" almost didn't beat the deadline, Tan said.

Morales commented, half in jest, that this thing his film "required transcendent Will and Grace."

"We're very happy that we're complete this year," said Tom Rocero, Cinemalaya coordinator, "Our goal is for all the directors to finish."

Carnival theme

Not all the filmmakers were present at the carnival-themed launch, though. Rocero noted. "Tara Mariscope ("Brutas" director) was in Mindoro."

En bloc, Mindoroqui encountered a problem with a people's organization that claimed her film violated Mangyan traditions.

"She crossed all the permits and the screening will push through," Rocero pointed out.

Tonyboy Cojuangco, head of the Giandoya Foundation, said all 10 filmmakers "challenged themselves to go further, in terms of quality and storytelling."

Making the Cinemalaya launch pure carnival was its opening film: Adolf Alix Jr.'s "Kubot" top-billed by Anita Linda.

The legendary actress was reduced to tears after receiving a standing ovation from the 3,800 crowd at the CCP Main Theater.

"The entire 13,000-seat theater was filled, up to the fourth floor," Rocero said.

E-mail: bayanisandiego@hotmail.com

LIFE PICK. Quillon and Johnny Delgado

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1. MAMMA MIA PG-13 2:00, 4:30, 7:00, 9:30
2. MAMMA MIA PG-13 1:30, 4:00, 6:30, 9:00
3. JOURNEY SP 12:00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 9:45
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He's found his niche

By Marinel R. Cruz

DEVELOPING DANTES, ONE OF GMA 7's top talents, is concerned about how he-reigns pinning him against fellow Kapuso actor Richard Gutierrez every affect their personal relationships.

Dingdong is aware that a virtual battle—over who between himself and Richard is GMA 7's No. 1 actor—is raging on the Net. The "feisty" fan also became the subject of several tabloid stories.

"Richard's fans may think I'm saying negative things about him, or my supporters may think he's criticizing me. None of those were from us," he told Inquirer Entertainment during a press conference for Gen Shindler Brandy which he is endorsing.

He added: "I know what's happening be-

TAKE FIVE

cause I've been asked to comment about it."

Dingdong assured his supporters, "Everything is OK between me and Richard." He said he actually admired the way Richard has been handling the situation.

"I believe that he has his own niche in the industry, so I have my own. Even the roles we play are very different....Richard is busy doing action roles while I'm involved in romantic-comedy," said the lead actor of the top-rating prime-time show "Dyesebel."

You're reaching very high. Could you be setting up for something big, maybe a grand reunion with Kaye[ler]?

Its context with what I have right now, I have the limits—at least, as far as I think I'll just keep my concepts in the limit for now, though. I'm thinking of putting up another business, now that my term [as Consumerage Movement by Kaye[ler], is opening a branch on Jupiter Street in Makati.

Your name keeps popping up on the list of show biz celebs who may want to run for public office. Do you have plans?

I've always been active in public service, even back when I was just starting in show biz. I served with the National Youth Commission of the Department of Education. I worked with a couple of non-government organizations. It's my way of giving back. I'm happy when I do that. But I don't want to think about politics at this point.

What are you recommending on at the moment?

I want to improve my acting. I wanted for a long time for this break [lead role in top-rating telenovela] to come. I don't want to have to earn my keep soon. There's so much more to do, so many movies that I want to be part of.

E-mail marinel@inquirer.com.ph

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Alessandra: I talk too much

By Marinel R. Cruz

ALESSANDRA DE ROSSI

ALESSANDRA DE Rossi believes it pays to put her heart and mind into whatever she's doing.

This explains her Best Supporting Actress awards from the Film Academy of the Philippines and the Metro Manila Film Festival in 2003—the first for Joel Lamangan's "Hubog" and the latter for Carlitos Siguion-Reyna's "Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo."

This is also why she takes every role as "I'm not ready." Alex, 24, says simply, and when will she be ready? "Maybe when I've had a baby."

She is starring with Pinky Amador in the indie movie "Manila," a suite bill directed by Adolf Alix Jr. and Raya Martin. "We have a local scene," says Alex, "but it still be done very tastefully."

The 5'6-inches actress says she's happy with her career right now. The Kapuso actress, "Encantadia," where she played a villainess, wrapped up recently. She may join a talk show next. And she recently signed up to endorse Simply Perfect, a skincare clinic.

Meanwhile, Alex says she was shocked when sister Antonia, recently on GMA 7's "Showbiz Central," expressed her disappointment about the way ABS-CBN handled her career. "Tsaka sana, nilaka ako ni Gabby Lopez (Representative GMA)."

"I would have understand her va he lose lunch, but I knowes she's wonderful. I say that," Jessica Alex, who is also known for her strong views. "I myself have often gotten into trouble because I talk too much."

E-mail marinel@inquirer.com.ph

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OPENS JULY 17!

THE DARK KNIGHT

ENTERTAINMENT

RIA ACONDO SAYS IT TAKES TWO HOURS TO make her assume the looks of the title character in ABS-CBN's "Berry Ja Poa." Think "Light Berry," the US version of the Liberalistas hit series. Well, she does look almost every inch like America Ferrera here.

DID YOU KNOW...

Kapuso sets anniversary events

By Harmell S. Cruz

A BIG PUBLIC BIRTHDAY BASH FOR TOP network exec Deogracias Torres and Wilma Galvante is set as the Big Dance for August.

In the same month, "Pinoy Idol," the talent show co-produced by Americans Fernando Mo dia, will name its first winner at the SMX Convention Center in Pasay City.

A red carpet affair will be held at the GMA 7 grounds in October to launch the network's sprawling new 1,000-seat studio.

These are part of the Kapuso network's yearlong 36th anniversary celebration, according to Wilma Galvante, GMA 7 senior vice president for entertainment.

The launch of new sitcoms "Codename: Asero" at the AFP Theater in Camp Aguinaldo last week, sets idea part of the elaborate festivities. And because the show's lead actor Richard Gutierrez, is a certified hit with kids from 2 to 12, the network is cooking up a "Captain Barbell mini-Dome" series in 2009.

Richard portrayed Teng and his alter-ego Captain Barbell in the TV adaptation of the Mars Ravelo comics novel in 2006. Angel Locsin, now a talent of rival network ABS-CBN, played the role of Dama for GMA 7 in 2005.

Who will play Dama then? "We're still looking," says Galvante.

Two stars of the sit-com are being built inside the GMA 7 lot in Quezon City. "We're so excited to start production in our biggest studio. We will do all our live shows, musicals and pageants there," Galvante adds.

"Pinoy Idol" finals night will be held in the 9,130-sq. m. exhibit hall of the SMX Convention Center.

Another Probinsiv Media production, "Celebrity Inuts," which had buy-in columnist Tessa Prieto-Valdes as first-season winner, will have a season 2 next year.

"Kahasa Ka Ba Sa Grade 5?" produced by Sta Broadcasting, will air for another season soon.

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MARIAN Rivera

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7 MY MONSTER MOM
8 indieTime: BARAKO
9 KAMBYO
10 THE WARLORDS

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PIONEER

1 JOURNEY to the CENTER of the EARTH
2 HANCOCK
3 MAMMA MIA!
4 THE WARLORDS

STA. ROSA

1 JOURNEY to the CENTER of the EARTH
2 THE WARLORDS
3 FORBIDDEN KINGDOM
4 HANCOCK
5 MAMMA MIA!

LIPA

1 HANCOCK
2 GET SMART
3 WANTED
4 MY MONSTER MOM
5 MAMMA MIA!

DASMARINAS

1 HANCOCK
2 THE WARLORDS
3 JOURNEY to the CENTER of the EARTH
4 MAMMA MIA!

IMUS

1 MAMMA MIA!
2 JOURNEY to the CENTER of the EARTH
3 THE WARLORDS
4 HANCOCK

ANGELES

1 HANCOCK
2 MAMMA MIA!
3 MY MONSTER MOM
4 WANTED / SUPERHERO MOVIE

STARMILLS

1 MAMMA MIA!
2 ALONE
3 MY MONSTER MOM
4 SUPERHERO MOVIE
5 HANCOCK
6 WANTED

BACOLOD

1 JOURNEY to the CENTER of the EARTH
2 HANCOCK
3 MAMMA MIA!
4 WANTED
5 SEX AND THE CITY
6 ALONE

ILOILO

1 JOURNEY to the CENTER of the EARTH
2 MY MONSTER MOM
3 MAMMA MIA!
4 HANCOCK
5 ALONE
6 WANTED

Brats, scandals, forced quirks in 'Dirty Sexy Money'

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit
Contributor

SHOWS LIKE "SIX FEET UNDER," "My Misfortune" and "Desperate Housewives" know more than their share of contrived quirkiness. "Dirty Sexy Money" has an abundance of it.

The new series' cast of oddball characters and situations could, frankly, be a test of patience. But once you get past the gimmicks, "Dirty Sexy Money" becomes interesting, even intriguing.

The story is told through the eyes of family man Nick George ("Six Feet Under's" Peter Krause), who takes over his father's position as lawyer to one of New York's wealthiest families immediately after the elder George's death in a plane crash.

We're soon introduced to the Darlings: Tripp (Donald Sutherland) is the ambitious patriarch with guarded secrets; his wife Letitia (Jill Clayburgh) is the eccentric who lost a long affair with Nick's father.

Colorful lives

The privileged Darling brood likewise lead colorful lives. Patrick (William Baldwin) secretly overdoses on his affair with a transgender (Comelle Caruso), and is pursued by daddy to run for the US Senate. Brian (Glenn Fitzgerald) is the surly screenwriter who's endlessly rebellious. "Professional deviant" Karen (Nicollette Zeta) is pleasing her fourth marriage, while still unresponsive about her feelings for former Bush Hitt. The youngest of the siblings are underachieved and directionless twins, party animal Jeremy (Seth Gabel) and science-wunderkin Juliet (Jurnee Smollett).

As if you're not swayed to a chockfull of misbehavior and scandal already, there's a hint of local plots involved in the dreams of Nick's dad, and one of the Darlings may be responsible.

Rolling in a typical dramedy comedy, "Dirty Sexy Money" suddenly be- comes a mystery. There, major se- cretes with such complications to trigger the right emotional re- sponses, and that angle promptly fades into the background.

You must be tempted to drop it, case in rare episodes into season 1, because of the forced cleanness. But if you pass that, you'll be pleased to discov- ery Darling, major se- cretes with such complications to trigger the right emotional re- sponses, and that angle promptly fades into the background.

You must be tempted to drop it, case in rare episodes into season 1, because of the forced cleanness. But if you pass that, you'll be pleased to discover that it is a nice, eclectic mystique on dust to show, get instinct, taking time to talk some story lines.

The cast is perhaps unusual only to that of "Brothers and Sisters," in that it is a nice, eclectic mystique of TV and film actors—a talented bunch, some duke notwithstanding.

("Dirty Sexy Money," airs Tuesdays, 9-9:45 p.m., on Studio 23)

Top three songs on celebs' playlists

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

Good music, good company

WHO CAN LEAVE HOME WITHOUT AN iPod these days? Nothing like good music to keep us daily companion as we get lost in the shuffle, or shuffle with the lost.

We are what we listen to. Come, eavesdrop with me as I let you in on the top three songs on celebs' playlists.

Mine are "One True Love" (Double Apartment), "La Vie en Rose" (Grace Jones) and "Never Stop" (Bread Box Stories). What are yours?

SAM MILBY: "Sacrifice" (Lifehouse), "Never Too Late" (3 Days Grace), "Maroon Lover" (A Fine Frenzy).

TONI GONZAGA: "Labels or Love" (Fergie), "Party People" (Dolly Initiating Fergie), "Forever" (Chris Brown).

RHONA NAVARRO: "Closer" (Ne-yo), "Do You?" (Ne-yo), "Tie-Cooling" (Flo-Rida).

BRENDA TRILLO: Songs from the all-trama "Third" (Backstreet), "Inevitable Collapse in the Process of Conviction" (Indoor Green), "Phantom Limb" (Pig Destroyer).

VHONG Navarro

MARK Herras

RHEEN Lena

TONI Gonzaga

GRETCHEN BARRETTO: "You & Me" (Lifehouse), "Pedlin" (Limp Bizkit), "The Prayer" (Charlotte Church & Josh Groban).

MARK HERRAS: "It Ain't" (Outkast), "He Ain't" (Jordin Sparks & Chris Brown), "Closer" (Ne-yo).

JENNYLYN MERCADO: "Please Stay" (Kylie Minogue), "Ha?" (Nina Volmer), "Make You Happy" (Jyon Volmer).

ALFRED VARGAS: "Dig" (Incubus), "Broken" (Deadsound Combination), "I Just Can't Stop Loving You" (Michael Jackson).

MIRIAM QUIAMBAO: "Pokiak Una Na Reyna," "Kisses," "Is Nars" (Parmisyo presents Asian Lounge album).

JOLINA MAGDANGAL: "Pili" (Asin Legend), "Somewhere Fields Forever" (Beatles), "Will of the Wind" (Joshua Macdougal).

AZIA RIVERRA: "Ghost" (Indigo Girls), "You're Like Home" (Chantal Kreviazuk), "Small Enough" (Nicole Nordeman).

PAULEEN LENA: "Save Room," "PDA," "Ordinary People" (all by John Legend).

Concert celebration

Linoh Skye Valdez, Lorely Rivera, Jea Ertal and Gisela Garcia in "Usher: The Concert (A Celebration of Love, Life and Friendship)" on July 18, Friday, 8 p.m. at Teatrino in Promenade GreenHills. That's gal power x 4!

E-mail: [redacted]

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Batman month

THE KILLER DONS THE MASK OF the Dark Knight in "Batman Forever" as he goes up against Two-Face (Tommy Lee Jones) and The Riddler (Jim Carrey), with Robin (Chris O'Donnell) by his side—this while embracing the adventures of Dr. Chase Meridian (Nicole Kidman), July 19, 8 p.m., on G/E/RPN.

JM Carey as The Riddler

George Clooney takes his turn as the Caped Crusader in "Batman & Robin," the battle of Mr. Freeze (Arnold Schwarzenegger) and Poison Ivy (Uma Thurman) with the help of Robin (Chris O'Donnell) and Batgirl (Alicia Silverstone), July 21, also at 8 p.m., on G/E/RPN.

'The Fifth Peak'

On July 15, homage of Kent Gardner's conquest of the Denali summit will be aired on GMA 7's "Born to be WOW."

After his successful descent climb in 2005, Gardner goes for Mt. McKinley, also known as "Denali" (The Great One), in Alaska. The episode is titled, "The Fifth Peak."

Denali, the highest peak in North America and one of the seven highest in the world, is Gardner's fifth mountain summit.

Truth challenge

The game show, "The Moment of Truth" puts participants in the (In the secret) test, to reveal whether or not they are telling the truth for a chance to win/half a million dollars.

Hosted by Mark Wahlberg, the show has a simple challenge: Answer 21 personal questions honestly, the truthfulness of the responses is/is determined by a polygraph.

Before playing, participants are strapped to a lie detector and asked a series of questions by a polygraph operator, who records their answers.

The show airs Thursdays, 8 p.m. on Jack Channel, QTV 29, SkyCable channel 19, Global Destiny channel 33 and Dream Satellite channel 36.

LEARNING

Email: learning@inquirer.com.ph
Text: 0918 9028821
Edited by Chichi Rosal Fermoso

Inquirer in Education

Pay attention, teach: The K6 Lesson Plan Contest deadline for this month's entries is July 15. Watch out for the top pick—a winning lesson plan, which will be published on July 28. For today's K6 lesson plan, turn to page K4.

TOMORROW'S LEADERS

Desiree of the mountains

This bright and young Igorot hopes to follow in Rosa Rosal's footsteps

By Jerry Esplanada-Santiago
Contributor

LOOKING AT 15-YEAR-OLD DESIREE SOKOten, one would not guess she is a full-blooded Igorot from the Mountain Province. She could easily pass for a Chinese-Filipino mestiza.

"I've spent all my life in the Mountain Province. This is my first time to be in Manila," Sokoten said when she was in town recently for the 9th Ramon Magsaysay Student Essay Writing Competition. Sokoten was one of four finalists in the high

SEE PAGE K2

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Rosa Rosal: A true public servant

By Desiree Sokoten

(Editor's Note: This essay qualified Ms Sokoten as regional finalist in the high school division of the recent RSF-Award Student Essay Competition. In the coming weeks, Learning will publish the winning essays in the high school and college levels.)

ONE MORNING ON A STUDENT CLINICAL clinique a person for a visitation.

One night, a young girl was brought to the hospital. She had fallen from a five-story building and had lost a lot of blood. As she lay in the hospital bed, seemingly lifeless, a young hospital volunteer managed to avail of the much-needed blood supply from the Red Cross. As the red liquid was transfused into the victim's veins, the volunteer witnessed the vital role of blood to life. This incident had significantly changed not one but two lives... she vowed to continue her life, the volunteer began a lifetime mission.

That is, in 1950, Florence Lansang Rosario, then a promising 19 year old activist and more popularly known as Rosa Rosal, registered herself as an official volunteer for the Philippine National Red Cross. She offered herself under its Blood Program, which has since become her lifetime passion.

Most Filipinos must know who Rosa Rosal is. She became famous as a multi-awarded movie star, but she built a solid reputation as a social worker for her selfless devotion to the Red Cross Blood Program.

As an ordinary high school student, I did not know much about Rosa Rosal except all I became a PNRC volunteer myself. To be part of this non-governmental organization and not know Rosal is next to impossible. As I started work with the Red Cross, my fascination for Rosa Rosal's woman steadily grew. In a nutshell, I think Rosa Rosal is one smart Filipina. Smart is an action packed adjective that sounds for Spearheads, Mobilizes, Acts, Facilitates, Tertiaries.

Rosa Rosal spearheads. It could not be denied that Rosal has been a constant driving force in the Red Cross programs. Proof of this claim are her many work in newspapers. Following the footsteps of other kind-hearted persons like Swiss philanthropist Jean Henri Dunant and American humanitarian Clara Barton, Rosal left her easy camp in the development of the PNRC. Among her innovations is the extension of the Blood Program. Recognizing the need to bring blood centers to the countryside, she urged the Red Cross to establish regional blood centers. Knowing the importance of screening donated blood for the safety of recipients, she worked for other programs of the Philippines' first refrigerated centrifuge and equipment needed to check blood samples from any infection especially from the AIDS virus. Moreover, Rosal started public service programs like Damayan. Via this television show, she is able to appeal to more effective individuals and organizations to assist those who are in need.

Rosal Rosal mobilizes. Rosal has a

Imagine how great she can be.

Perhaps the next Picasso? Or another Amorsolo. She can have a future far better than you've ever imagined with Insular Life Excel. I-Excel supplements college tuition fees, provides funds for thesis, practicum and project expenses. It awards deserving students with additional cash incentives and ensures your child will get an education even when you are no longer around. Share her future right. Zinassure in online reach with Insular Life I-Excel.

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Pinagsanib ng MIND

FEU official offers advice on how to land that first job

CATHERINE E. Valencia, director of the Eastern University's counseling and career office, says nonexperience-hirers want graduates to have good interpersonal skills. She also says students to be good listeners, too. Valencia says employers are looking for people who show grace under pressure. Job applicants should dress professionally and should leave their bad habits or annoying mannerisms at the door. She stresses the importance of networking and practice for the development of a student. Many companies can see through an intern's work if he/she is a good fit in the company. Students, on the other hand, get hands-on training and can add to their resume the things they've learned in the professional world even before they get their diplomas.

World's fastest reader now Arellano dean

MAYOR Teresa Aldaz-Calderon, once listed by the Guinness Book of World Records as the World's Fastest Reader, is now dean of Arellano University's Rizal-wide Dizon Memorial School for Graduate Studies in Manila. At the graduate school, she took charge of administration, programs and personnel quality research. She's now Cabinet Secretary, graduate studies, admission and programs. She succeeds Reynaldo L. Fernandez, dean of the Graduate School of Nursing, based on excellent communication skills. Students noting their vocational thesis are required to undergo the Writing Programs designed to enhance written communication skills in English, particularly grammatical skills. Calderon has an AB in Political Science, MAEd in Education, and PhD in [illegible], all from the University of the Philippines in Diliman. She runs the Calderon Reading Workshop Inc. established in 1969.

JRU-MPA prof in UP colloquium

A PAPER on titles by professor Eli E. Rotairo, acting head and faculty member of the Jose Rizal University Graduate Studies in Public Administration program, was among those presented during the recent colloquium on the Philippine public administration held in connection with the University of the Philippines (UP) Centennial Celebrations. The event was organized by the UP National College of Public Administration and Governance.

Theme of the colloquium was: "Is there a Philippine Public Administration? A Timeless Issue." Rotairo's paper provided a comprehensive review of public administration using governance effectiveness all over the country, the drive to expand the role of societal civic dialogues or engineering and action. The colloquium papers will be published in a special issue of the Philippine Journal of Public Administration.

Outstanding UE grad is TOSP national finalist

UNIVERSITY of the East (UE) alumnus Rikhal Dion Rivera is one of 30 national finalists in the 2008 Ten Outstanding Students of the Philippines (TOSP) search. The magna cum laude BS Accountancy graduate of the Lucknow College of Business Administration represents the National Capital Region. The TOSP awardees will be honored July 11 in Malacañang. TOSP is a project of the KIM Foundation Inc. and BPM Group, with Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., Commission on Higher Education, Pasay Club of Makati-Central and Rotaract Binondo-Intramuros.

5 Centro Escolar grads in top 10 of dentistry licensure examination

FIVE students of the Centro Escolar University School of Dentistry landed in the top ten of the recent dentistry licensure examination. Dr. Geronimo D. de la Rosa ranked first with a grade of 94.04 percent. Dr. Kristine S. Sindayan had third with 93.70 percent. Dr. Vilette Kaye C. Tan, fifth, 93.56 percent and Drs. Adrian Dave P. Sandoval and Shaina Mae M. Barza, ninth, 93.36 percent. The CEU School of Dentistry was cited by the Professional Regulation Commission as a top performing school for dentistry. It is the only dental school awarded by the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation with a Level III accreditation.

RESORT CAMPUS
The Lyceum of the Philippines University in Cavite is the country's first and only resort campus. Taking on a no-fence lot, it has gardens, waterfalls, reflecting pool, pet exotic animals, Chinese zoo, classrooms and other facilities are fully air-conditioned. Gracing the centennial ribbon are (L-R) Rose Lanot-Manzanilla, former Sen. Jovito Salonga, Senate President Manuel B. Villar, Miss Laurel Pagunsan and former Prime Minister Cesar E. A. Virata. At the back are Bishop Rolando Tria Tirona, board of trustees chair Maria Lorna Perez Laurel and Lyceum president Roberto P. Laurel.

Robotics gold medalist FAITH is top ICT school

FIRST ROA Institute of Technology and Humanities (FAITH) bested more than 1,000 schools to win a gold medal at an international competition for robotics, one survival Best Private School Information and Communication Technology (ICT) competition in Caloocan. FAITH received the award from Department of Education Regional Director Dr. Fe Hadsan-Sinsay. FAITH was cited for its robotics facilities and equipment and for helping its sister schools to integrate robotics into its curriculum. FAITH also received the Integrated E-Learning Management Program as an interactive tool enhancing students and teachers to augment what they learn in textbook. The school is the first school to visit and use of Genyo in Batangas.

For inquiries about the FAITH Robotics and ICT programs, please e-mail inquiries@faith.edu.ph or log on to www.faith.edu.ph.

JRUAA's new officers and board members

JOSE Rizal University Alumni Association inducted recently its new officers and board of directors. JRU alumnus retired police Maj. Gen. Eleuterio B. Suaitan is now special assistant to the commissioner of the Bureau of Customs, recipient of honor and instructing officer. In photo (L-R): Zilwa T. Elevencio (BSIS '97), Vivian M. Bartolome (BECT '76), Edna U. Tang (CSP '80), Dr. Bernard V. Valverde (former university president), former secretary of education, Isabel C.Y. Cui (MBA '06), Suaitan to (BCS '79), Evangeline B. de Jesus (BS '80), Jose S. Cruz (BS '69), Edgardo M. del Rosario (BCS '86) and Bettie M. Bundoc (BCS '88). Aside it are supporting the university sports activities, the JRUAA also has scholars.

Marykroll Miriam launches credit card for alumni

THE MARYKNOLL Mission College Alumnae Association (MMCAA) Board of Trustees has launched the MMCAA Visa Card with the country's second tie-gold bank, Equitable-PCI Bank (EPCI). Executive Vice President Ma. Victoria Ang-Ty said the card is for Philippine pesos or American dollars. At present, it will be available only to Philippines-based members. E-mail alumni@mc.edu.ph, or call telefax 4358-017 ext of the Mission College hotline 5888000 to 28.

Adamson sends three to World Youth Day '08 in Sydney

THREE students of Adamson University will participate in the World Youth Day festivities slated from 15 to 20 July in Sydney, Australia. Kim Raphael Bongao (BS Operations Management), Ricardo Paolo Lim (BS Accountancy) and Jasmine Corinne Cayabo (BS Computer Engineering) will also join the week-long gathering of the Vincentian family until July 20. World Youth Day (WYD) 2008 is attracting together more than 500,000 young people. It will also mark the first visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Australia.

Angelicum marks 36th Foundation Day

ANGELICUM College, the only academic institution in the Philippines offering lay-person-guided system of education, celebrated its 36th Foundation Day at Crowne Plaza Galleria Corporate Center, Ortigas. Theme was "Tatlumpung Taon na Nagmamahal, Gumagabay at Nagpapalaya." Angelicum highlighted by the five-day activity demands Recognition of 21 employees. The launch of the issue of the Outstanding Learning Facilitator, and recognition of different organizers, companions and alumni who became pioneers in promoting the college's mission-vision, academic programs and activities. Service awardees for 2008-2009 are Mrs. Victoria R. Aguinaldo, Mark J. Aldo, Rosalina C. Garcia, Corazon Q. Nacionales, Raymundo M. Obeña III, Gladys E. Sta. Ana, Jessica B. Candal, Ronald S. Semirara, Rodgen B. Palana, Emerson T. Sunico, Rosemarie F. Barba, Rowena S. de Guzman, Mary Jane N. de Vera, Mary Rose C. Ingles, Rosemarie B. Samar, Rowena A. Sorita, Amanda L. Sluay, Catherine F. Bladenas, Josephine P. Cabrera, Ma. Jeanette S. Dan Pedro, and Angelita R. de Ocampo.

UE
University of the East

EUREKA! *Queenie V. Lee-Chua*

Lessons from a Samurai

"THE IMPORTANT THING IN A samurai battle is not strength," says master swordsman Tetsuzo Shimaguchi, "but timing." He graciously invites a friend and offer to study the arena his opponent, promptly—pardon the pun—driving the point home.

My husband and I, together with our 18-year-old son Sean, are in the Tokyo studio of Shimaguchi, taking a beginner's class in Iaijutsu Sword Action. Other students include a London backpacker and a couple from Edinburgh.

Except for the husband from Edinburgh, a historic scene of us has ever wielded a sword, much less in the revered Japanese tradition. We are eager to learn from a genuine master.

'Kill Bill'

Shimaguchi was the head choreographer in the sunny garden swordfights scenes in the movie "Kill Bill Volume 1." He also played Gorry 66 (Hattori), one of samurai Ii Naosuke's executioner.

It was not difficult to choreograph the scene, Shimaguchi says, but the actors and actresses (especially Lia, who did most of her swords) needed months of preparation.

He can very well believe that. Samurai are the military nobility in pre-modern Japan, and armor not only their own lords but also the emperor. Thus, samurai swordfights are not like Hollywood rough-and-tumble scenes, where power rules. Samurai battles are elegant, precise, and yes—boredom-able.

For instance, samurai do not stab people in the back. Before dealing the death blow, samurai shout a warning to their opponents, to give them a chance to defend themselves (it's an improvement by risk, and get a glimpse of how opponents can still treat each other with dignity).

Samurai action

We first learn how to hold the sword properly (no practice with wooden swords, in solo or battle) first. Then we go through the basic postures (drawing the sword, posing with it, and swinging it) again and again, till we get the strokes right. Finally we get the thrill of fighting with Shimaguchi's assistant, after which our performance is evaluated and videotaped.

The lesson from Edinburgh performs well, and so does my husband. "Are you sure this is your first time?" Shimaguchi asks. "All those childhood days of plastic swordfights are paying off," my husband says.

But what delights us most is that Sean manages to learn the moves correctly—mostly due to the patience of Shimaguchi and Hiro. The two of them need a translator for their instructions, but their attitude and respect, for children and adults, for foreigners and each other, shine through.

In no way do we feel hurried, or that time is running out. Unlike local activities or after-school classes, no one looks at the clock during this three-hour session.

Shimaguchi and his team have performed in Edinburgh, London, New York, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and Chicago. They make a seasonal film, perform in crowd acts, and appear in arts festivals. Shimaguchi loves to work with other cultures ("I would love to visit the Philippines," he tells us), and tries his best to spread the authentic spirit of Japanese swordsmanship around the world.

Cultural experiences

"Not many Asians enroll in this class," says the translator from H.I.S. Experience, the tour company that promotes the samurai session. "The participants are usually from the US or Europe."

I am not surprised. For Asians, sightseeing and shopping are the main pleasures in travel, and while these can be fun, I believe that the best way to learn about a culture is to immerse ourselves in it.

H.I.S. Experience aims to give tourists a taste of traditional Japan. Here are other offerings:

- Ninja—Learn the techniques of undercover spies, including concealed body-combat skills.
- Sumo—Challenge wrestlers in the ring and gain insights into their training.
- Sushi—Discover the secrets of outstanding food, a source of the art.
- Tattoo—Paint the Brown Museum and find out why the sound of taiko drums is said to be that of the human soul.

Other classes include a tea ceremony, sumi-e painting, classical dance, calligraphy. You can also try your hand at making kites, lanterns, chimes, or quilts.

At 12,000 yen each (around P5,000), the class is not cheap. However, we deem the cost well worth it. Visit the H.I.S. Experience website at http://hisexperience.jp/

E-mail the author at lifeattheedge@yahoo.com.

SWORDSMANSHIP The author's son Sean practices samurai moves with master Tetsuzo Shimaguchi at the latter's Tokyo studio.

Rosa Rosal . . . From page B1

She spearheads, motivates, acts, radiates and twinkles

and hope.

Rosa Rosal twinkles. On a starry night, a sunglasses bonds his eyes as the chess and glittering stars across the skies. But there will always be that particular star he would notice because it shines brighter than the others. The same thing is true of Rosal. As the PNRC many volunteers constitute the team. But Rosal continues everyone his her constant desire to go the extra mile for the Filipinos and show that Rosal Relief with not only her materials assistance but also with all the people she has helped over the years.

This is who Rosa Rosal is—a woman who spearheads, motivates, acts, radiates and twinkles. She is one smart lady—whom the Filipinos are lucky to have.

For having this kind of person, she has greatly inspired me...not just to my voluntary work at the Red Cross but also in my future role in my country. I was not only truly grateful when Rosa Rosal received her Ramon Magsaysay Award for Public Service in 1999. Had I been as enlightened than as I am now about her person, I might have been one of those who would have applauded and cheered her on as she received her award.

Who she is, what she has done and what she is doing opened my mind to the real meaning of public service. Public service is putting the needs of others before your own. Public service is being selfless. Rosa Rosal made me realize that public service knows no boundary. Young or old, rich or poor, a celebrity or an ebony—one can still be a public servant. There are still lots of things to be done. Hordes of true public servants are needed to help the country.

To end, Rosa Rosal is who I want to be soon and in the future—a true public servant.

AT THE RIM Student Essay Competition finalists (last row) Paco Magsaysay, former Senator Ramon Magsaysay Jr., Maria Concepcion, Rosin Hernandez, Emily Abrera, Mike Dizon, Kelly Bautista, Agglaiah Maria, Carmencita T. Abella; (middle row) high school winner Kate Lynn Hosaka, IEC Concepcion Magsaysay Award winners Raul Rosal and Eugenia Duran Apostol, college winner Ethel Lemuel Villegas (front row) Student Melissa Antonio Alpuerto, Eleanor Balagulan, Desiree Salcedo and Elaine Marie Lucanas

Desiree of the mountains From page B1

school category.

Although it did not win the top prize, Salcedo's essay stands out because of its writer's first-hand involvement as a volunteer with the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) since 2006.

The experience inspired her to write about PNRC governor and 1999 Magsaysay Award winner for Public Service Rosa Rosal for the RM essay contest.

No boundaries

"My fascination with her started when I became a PNRC volunteer, and this fascination grew when I read of her work in fact as one of the RM awardees," she said. "Rosa Rosal made me realize that public service knows no boundaries. Young or old, rich or poor, celebrity or ordinary, [pictured]—one can be a public servant."

She began her relevance with when she was just a sophomore at the Mountain Province International Comprehensive High School (MPCIHS). "I was motivated to join the PNRC because of my desire to help others in need. I find it quite refreshing. It makes me think helping others is an accomplishment, which is truly heart-warming."

Together with other student volunteers from her school, Salcedo actively participated in PNRC community services like cleaning streets and river banks, and looking for blood donors.

She attributed her compassionate nature to her good moral upbringing. She said her parents instilled in her and her nine siblings the golden rule and to love and help other people.

Salcedo is the second of five children of the late botanist and Shirley Ngalob-Salcedo. She comes from a family of teachers. Her father and most of her uncles and aunts are educators.

A consistent honor student since grade school, she graduated valedictorian from All Saints Mission Elementary School (Aames) and is now a candidate for the same top academic honor as a senior at MPCIHS.

Passion for writing

"I discovered my passion for writing in elementary school when our school paper was revived," she recalled.

As a staff writer of Amers Mountaineer and now as associate editor of her high school paper, The ESL, Salcedo wrote mostly news reports. She is not into literary writing, as one would expect of an essay contest winner.

For an Igorot who only spoke the local language at home, Salcedo is very articulate in English. She has had two awards as best in English at MPCIHS.

"English is my favorite subject, but I also love Math as I joined a regional bookkeeping contest...the Student Technician and Entrepreneur in the Philippines. I was third placer," she said.

Aside from the prestigious RM essay writing contest, she has also joined about five other local essay competitions and a debate contest.

She considered her school paper advisor Elyssar Ngayng, who also happened to be her cousin and English teacher, her writing coach. It was from Ngayng that she learned about the RM essay contest.

Salcedo had only won her ideal in pressure and an attraction and did not meet her ideal the venue to thanks for the awards. Her her essay, she said she relied primarily on materials furnished by the RM Foundation.

Now back in her hometown, Salcedo is busy preparing for the University of the Philippines College Admission Test. She plans to take up either broadcasting or tourism at UP.

But regardless of what career she eventually pursues, this Kalai has dreams of establishing a charitable foundation for the needy.

E-mail the author at jessiepisco@yahoo.com

SCHOLARSHIPS

Young entrepreneurs

THE GERMAN government, with the Bi La Salle University Lyceum Philippine Office, is offering the Konrad Zuse Scholarship to enable young entrepreneurs from developing countries to build up an information and communications technology business in their home countries. The program is open to applicants with degrees in mathematics or any related field, or those with several years of experience in the information, communication, technology (ICT) industry. The scholarship covers round trip airfare to and from Germany and monthly living allowance. Applications must be submitted to the German embassy on or before July 25. Log on to http://www.diplo.de/pk/pr/en/service/default.asp?id=457 or call the German embassy at 757-9700.

Post-grad study in UK

THE BRITISH Council Philippines is offering the British Chevening Scholarships for Filipino students and professionals not more than 40 years old who are interested to post-graduate courses or research in the United Kingdom. Four to five slots are available. The scholarship has been awarded for studies in economics and finance, management, banking, business administration, public administration, diplomatic training, environmental studies, development studies, international relations, project planning, human rights law, media studies, political science, journalism, among other fields. It covers all the costs of the period of study, including academic fees, monthly stipend and allowance to and from UK. Deadline for application is July 31. Visit http://www.britishcouncil.org/philippines-learning-funding-curriculum-british-chevening-scholarships.htm or call Alec Calanog, program officer of the British Council, at 814-1011 to 14-ext. 132.

Kate Pedroso, PDI Research

What I've learned

Books changed the course of my life

Tess Mabuy
Owner of Kanalayan Cafe in Baguio City that promotes reading but learning groups.

LET ME START BY SHARING THAT I NEVER took my studies seriously in my elementary, high school, and college years. All that was required of me by my parents was a diploma. I did the worst to ensure my graduation. I befriended my teachers, bribed my classmates to do my home work, or simply failed some subjects and took them up again.

When I finally graduated from college, I applied for jobs at different companies but was not accepted because I failed the IQ test.

It dawned on me that I hardly learned anything from school, and the few things I did learn could not even help me get a decent job. I felt most of the time I wasted and decided to do something about my life.

I started reading my old textbooks thinking that I could make up for lost time. Then I met an old friend who graduated summa cum laude from a prestigious school. I asked him how lucky he was to have a good job and how successful my life could be. What he told me completely changed my life.

He said that I was luckier because he had a hard time graduating since all those things he learned from school helped him a lot in his job.

He told me that I was lucky because I had a hard time graduating since I learned more things that could help me in my future endeavors. I felt insulted but he continued and suggested that I could read and study the newest books and learn the latest concepts that were relevant to this day and age without having to struggle with unlearning deeply embedded, outmoded beliefs like he had experienced.

From that day on I made the bookstores my library and searched for information that would provide me the new knowledge I needed to become successful. I read and bought as many as 15 books a month by authors like John Naisbitt, Deepak Chopra, Robert Kiyosaki, Wayne Dyer, Elinor Holmes, Marilyn Ferguson, Stephen Covey, Alvin Toffler and Anthony Robbins, and practiced whatever lessons I learned from them.

I simply learned how to learn and got myself into a life-long learning process.

I remember visiting a friend in his office where I met and conversed with his boss, the owner of the company. To my friend's surprise, I was hired to manage a big department in their company. I became so successful at the job and was offered three times what I was earning as a writer and a fat salary. Months later, I was pirated by another company. I never had to apply for a job from then on. I'd resign from one company and immediately be offered a position by a competing company.

Skills are relationships

By studying modern books, I was able to develop rare marketable skills that I had taken for granted in my early years. I gained my inner potential and interpersonal skills in the process. The books I read were mostly about relationships and knowing more oneself.

I had been transformed into a better person without my realizing it. When I started applying these principles and ways of thinking, their worth was proven. I had learned how people affect each other. I learned how to influence people without manipulating them. I learned how to communicate with people effectively. I learned how to motivate myself and others. I learned how to be a leader. I learned how to be a friend. I learned how to be a lover. I learned how to be a parent. I learned how to be a teacher. I learned how to be a student. I learned how to be a human being.

Books changed the course of my life. Without books, I would not be where I am now. I would not be married to the love of my life. I would not have the wonderful children I have. I would not have the friends I have. I would not have the job I have. I would not have the business I have. I would not have the life I have